

Series II  
Subjects Files,  
1916-1973

Box 15, Folder 8

Script for movie of  
Battle of Savo Island,  
1942

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S C R I P T

for

THE BATTLE

of

SAVO ISLAND

August 9, 1942

DECLASSIFIED BY AUTHORITY  
OF GEN. DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXEC. ORDER  
12958 DATED 17 APRIL 1995

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SUB TITLE:

FOREWORD

The purpose of this film is to provide a graphic presentation and analysis of the Battle of Savo Island from the viewpoint of the commander. Technical advice and supervision were furnished by the Naval War College. This film is based upon Naval War College Publication Navpers \_\_\_\_\_ which is in the classified libraries of most ships, and which completes the details of the battle.

As far as possible live-action footage and still photographs show actual events; but, where substitutions are made, they approximate the actual procedures.

This battle demonstrated forcibly the capabilities and limitations of the new technological equipment installed in the Allied ships - notably radar. It also provided many lessons in command which, while obvious today, greatly helped to increase the Navy's ability to conduct warfare.

SUB TITLE:  
INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Savo Island was the first night engagement between Japanese and Allied forces since the Allies had assumed the offensive.

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It was a serious tactical defeat to the Allied forces.....and it was a classic example of a powerful night raid by surface forces, employing surprise and withdrawal.

Map

The battle resulted from the Allied seizure of Tulagi and Guadalcanal to protect their communications to Australia.

Map

The Navy had fought the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. The Battle of the Coral Sea, May 8th, 1942, prevented the capture of Port Moresby; The Battle of Midway, June 3rd to 6th, 1942, forced the Japanese to abandon their plans to advance into New Caledonia and the Fijis.

However, within the Solomons, the Japanese continued to advance.

On May 2nd they had overrun the island of Tulagi. On May 4th they were attacked at Tulagi by Allied carrier planes just before the Battle of the Coral Sea. On July 4th they started to build an airfield at Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island. This airfield, together with others in the Solomon Island chain, was to be a strong point for the protection of Rabaul.

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But the Allies seized the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area including the Guadalcanal air base. Since this affected Japanese plans, the Japanese adopted strong counter-measures, beginning August 7th. Highlight of these was the night action of August 9th known as the Battle of Savo Island.

TITLE: THE TULAGI-  
GUADALCANAL AREA

Between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands is a body of water known among the Allies as Iron Bottom Sound....which is the southeastern extremity of The Slot (New Georgia Sound).

Savo is a round volcanic island, four miles in diameter rising to 1673 feet in its highest peak. The island divides the western approaches to Iron Bottom Sound into two wide passages.

The southerly passage is seven miles in width; the northerly passage is about ten miles in width.

Tulagi Harbor, midway on the southern coast of Florida Island, is the principal port of the Solomons.

Westward of Tulagi are no off-lying dangers. The general depth of Iron Bottom Sound varies between two hundred and four hundred fathoms.

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TITLE: WEATHER

During that portion of the year when the Battle of Savo Island was fought, the southeast trade winds operated and averaged ten to twenty knots. Fogs in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area are unknown at sea level, and reduced visibility occurs when there are downpours of rain, haze or low clouds. In the Savo Island area rain squalls seem to form nightly over Savo Island, causing heavy rain at 2330 and clearing about 0200, as they drift away. On the night of August 8th-9th, this bad weather formed as usual but failed to clear up.

TITLE: JAPANESE COMMAND  
RELATIONS

All Japanese fleets, including the Naval Air Fleets, excepting the China Seas Fleet were under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. The Combined Fleets consisted of the mobile fleets which could operate anywhere; of the area fleets which were defensive in character and were limited to geographical areas - of the 11th Air ~~Area~~ Fleet, which consisted of naval shore-based aircraft with headquarters on Tinian, and of the 6th Fleet which consisted of submarines.

On July 14th, to meet an Allied attack threat, the

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Japanese High Command created an Outer South Seas Area and an Inner South Seas Area. The commander of each area was responsible for the defense of his own area.

In order to obtain unity of command, in event of attack, Commander 11th Air Fleet at Tinian was authorized, if necessary, to assume command of the 4th, 6th, and 8th Fleets. This situation arose

After the Allied capture of Tulagi, ~~and the~~ Commander 11th Air Fleet, Vice Admiral Nishio Tsukahara was directed to ~~assume this command. He did so on August 7th, relieving~~ Vice Admiral Gunichi

Mikawa, the Commander Outer South Seas Force. *He did so some time in the afternoon.* The latter assumed the responsibility for securing a victory with the surface forces available.

There was no confusion in the Japanese command at the battle of Savo Island. All forces engaged were naval forces in a clearly defined chain of command.

TITLE: INFORMATION AVAILABLE  
TO THE JAPANESE COM-  
MANDER

The Japanese Commander knew that in the general area of the Coral Sea there was considerable Allied air and naval activity and there was a possibility of an early engagement with a powerful enemy force.

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He was aware of the Allied build-up of bases in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. He felt that this was preparation for a counterstroke in the southern Solomons.

His new base at Guadalcanal had been raided increasingly by air during the first week of August. He believed that a powerful Allied Force had sortied from Hawaii on August 2nd. He suspected that this force, joined with other Allied ships, would attack his Outer South Seas Area in the near future. He understood that there would be three carriers and a number of cruisers in the enemy force.

This intelligence was reasonably correct. However, the powerful Allied force had sortied from Fiji on August 1st rather than from Hawaii.

He knew that larger numbers of enemy submarines were beginning to infest the waters of his area.

He knew that the enemy had recently assembled great air strength in the New Hebrides and expected the enemy to invade Guadalcanal before Japanese air strength could be moved up.

He was not aware of the formation of SOPAC which was

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soon to conduct the expected assault on Guadalcanal.

He thought, with Imperial Headquarters, that any attack would probably be no more than a reconnaissance landing.

**TITLE: JAPANESE LAND AND TENDER  
BASED AIRCRAFT**

The Japanese had a finally developed advance base at Rabaul. Airfields were being rushed at Kavieng, New Ireland; Rabaul, New Britain; Lae, Salamaua, New Guinea; Buka Island, and Lunga Point, Guadalcanal. The land-based planes of the 25th Air Flotilla were disposed at Rabaul; the seaplanes were disposed at Rabaul and Tulagi. No planes were equipped with radar.

**TITLE: JAPANESE SEARCH AND  
RECONNAISSANCE**

The Japanese did not detect the Allied Expeditionary Force advancing northward along Meridian 159° E. on August 5th and 6th. The Japanese reported that bad weather prevented air searches on those days. The Japanese were therefore caught by complete surprise by the Allied landing August 7th. This caused an immediate change in Japanese search plans.

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TITLE: JAPANESE DISPOSITION  
NAVAL FORCES

As Rabaul was within range of New Guinea-based aircraft, Commander 8th Fleet decided Kavieng was a better anchorage for his heavy cruisers. At 0652, August 7th, Commander 8th Fleet received report of the sighting of the Allied Amphibious Force. His 8th Fleet was disposed as follows: His Flagship CHOKAI with heavy cruisers AOBA and KAKO was en route from Kavieng to Manus Island. The heavy cruisers KINUGASA and FURUTAKA were en route from Kavieng to Rabaul. All five had just cleared the southern entrance to Steffen Strait, New Ireland.

The light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI with destroyer YUNAGI were at Rabaul. The submarines I-121 and I-122 were at Rabaul; the I-123 was at Truk.

TITLE: GENERAL CONCEPT

Commander Outer South Seas Force apparently thought that should Allied forces attempt to penetrate this area, he would, during daylight, use his land-based aircraft as his principal weapon or, during night or low visibility, employ his surface forces as a principal weapon. As opportunity presented, he planned to support either air or surface attacks with his submarines.

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This concept would have been sound had adequate air and surface forces been available. However, such adequate forces were not available. The shortage of planes and bases, plus the bad weather which occurred at this time, plus some overconfidence permitted a surprise American landing to be made on Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

TITLE: ALLIED COMMAND  
RELATIONS

The entire Pacific area was divided into three large areas: Southwest Pacific, the Southeast Pacific and the Pacific Ocean. The latter area was subdivided into North, Central and South Pacific areas. The Pacific Ocean area was under the command of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, CINCPAC, with headquarters at Pearl Harbor. Under his direction was Commander South Pacific Area (COMSOPAC), Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley. COMSOPAC was in command of all operations in his area. He established his operational headquarters in the ARGONNE at Noumea, August 1st. The Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area, COMSOWESPAC, General Douglas MacArthur, had as his naval commander, Commander Allied Naval Forces, Southwest Pacific (COMSOWESPACFOR) who possessed all powers

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granted to Commanders-in-Chief of Fleets.

Unity of command was effected by moving the boundary between SOWESPAC and SOPAC from Long. 165 E to Long. 159 E. This placed Tulagi, Guadalcanal and other islands within the SOPAC Area with the result that the Battle of Savo Island was fought under COMSOPAC. The Joint Chiefs of Staff designated the seizure of Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions as TASK ONE and recommended that COMSOPAC Vice Admiral Robert Ghormley, command TASK ONE as COMSOPACFOR.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered that direct command of tactical operations of the amphibious forces was to remain with the naval task force commander; that COMSOWESPAC was to support the operations of TASK ONE by providing for the interdiction of enemy air and naval activities westward of the South Pacific area, and that COMSOWESPAC was to attach the necessary naval reinforcements and land-based air support.

As Commander of TASK ONE, COMSOPACFOR formed two task forces for this mission: TF 61, the Expeditionary Force, and TF 63, the shore-based aircraft.

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TF 61 was composed of TG 61.1, the Air Support Force, and of TG 61.2 the Amphibious Force. TG 61.1 was in turn composed of Pacific Fleet carrier task forces 11, 16 and 18. These three groups were designated as 61.1.1, 61.1.2 and 61.1.3. TG 61.2, which became known as TF 62, was composed of the South Pacific Amphibious Force, plus three heavy cruisers, one light cruiser and three destroyers from SOPAC and plus TF 44 less one heavy cruiser transferred from SOWESPAC.

TF 63 was composed of all land-based and tender-based aircraft attached to South Pacific Force. COMSOPACFOR designated as CTF 61 Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, CTF 11, and, as CTF 63, Rear Admiral John Sidney McCain.

TITLE: INFORMATION AVAILABLE  
TO THE ALLIED COM-  
MANDER

COMSOPAC realized the Japanese were planning to extend their control to the south and southeast. He knew that the Japanese were developing airfields at Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island; Bougainville Island, and one at Buka Passage, between Buka Island and Guadalcanal. This information was reasonably correct. Lunga Point Field was completed

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August 6th, Buka Passage Field, August 8th and the construction of Kieta Airfield was temporarily suspended.

He further knew the Japanese seaplanes based at Rabaul; Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel Island; Kieta, Bougainville Island; Gizo Island; Faisi, Shortland Island; Tulagi Harbor, Florida Island; and Buka Passage.

He believed that there were four heavy cruisers and three light cruisers in the Rabaul-Kavieng area. This was approximately correct. There were five heavy cruisers and but two light cruisers. He believed there were thirteen destroyers in the area. Actually, there were eight and all were assigned to escort duty.

He believed there were about fifteen submarines, which was markedly incorrect, as there were but ten submarines in the entire Outer South Seas Area, and only two of these were in the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons Area.

He believed the Japanese air strength in Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons Area consisted of about 60 VF.

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60 VB and 30 VP planes which estimate was 30% too high.

He realized the Japanese capability of striking with land-based air power at Allied Forces in the Guadalcanal Area was real.

He realized that, despite their Coral Sea and Midway losses, there was a Japanese capability of supporting their land-based air groups with carrier-based groups. Actually no carrier task forces appeared until after the battle of Savo Island.

Finally, he knew that the Japanese reconnaissance operated in depth and therefore he would probably be unable to effect surprise.

TITLE: ALLIED SEARCH AND  
RECONNAISSANCE

The basic problem of the Solomons offensive, as stated by COMSOPAC, was the protection of surface ships against land-based aircraft during the approach, the landing-attack and the unloading at the target area. He assigned CTF 63 a double task to cover these operations by search, and to render aircraft support on call. With this double duty, CTF 63 conducted but one search of his sectors daily. CTF 63 designed these searches primarily to detect

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any enemy carrier group entering the South Pacific from Truk or the Marshall Islands.

On August 8th, land-based searches were flown from the Pijis, Koumac, Noumea, Efate, and Espiritu Santo. B-17's were employed over the islands where enemy fighter opposition was expected.

DIAGRAMS B, C, D

DIAGRAM C

And the greater range of the PBV's was utilized over the open ocean.

As the Allies advanced, seaplane tenders went progressively forward to extend ranges northward -- from Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands and Maramasike Estuary in Malaita, and Second Channel, Espiritu Santo.

Cooperation of land-based units of SOWESPAC was necessary. Searches flown from Milne Bay and Port Moresby covered the Bismarck and Solomon Seas with particular attention to the entrances to the Coral Sea from the north and east.

Owing to a shortage of aircraft in his area, COMSOWESPAC made an agreement with COMSOPAC that he, COMSOWESPAC, would not attack naval targets unless requested to do so by COMSOPAC and that he would

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concentrate his air units primarily upon interdicting Japanese air operations against Allied forces in the Tulagi area. This agreement does not appear to have been sound for, does it not seem reasonable that COMSOWESPAC should have attacked automatically a strong surface force heading in the direction of Tulagi?

TITLE: COMMUNICATIONS ARRANGEMENTS

The Communication Plan provided a Communications Net "B" between bases where long-range air searches and bomber strikes would originate. This included Espiritu Santo, Efate, Noumea in SOPAC and Townsville and Port Moresby in SOWESPAC.

There was an additional Net "C" between air bases ashore, the tenders, task group commanders and all reconnaissance and bombardment aircraft in the SOPAC area. It did not provide for SOPAC air bases or task group or force commanders receiving contact reports from SOWESPAC aircraft in flight.

This plan would have been satisfactory had its full capabilities of rapid and effective communications been exploited. Instead, however, long delays occurred in the transmittal of vital information

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TITLE: ALLIED DEPLOYMENT OF  
NAVAL FORCES

which allowed the Japanese Cruiser Force to pass through the Solomons on August 8th with impunity.

In execution of TASK ONE, CTF 61 with TF 61, sortied the Fijis July 31st for Tulagi. He passed south of Efate and at 1200, August 5th, he headed his force northward in order to reach Tulagi on - DOG DAY - August 7th.

The Air Support Force, TG 61.1 headed for point

Baker. *his carrier task group* CTG 61.1 operated each of his three striking forces, SARATOGA, ENTERPRISE, and WASP ~~as a separate~~

~~group, forming them~~ in an equilateral triangle five miles apart but within mutual supporting and visual signal distance of one another. This was to reduce the risk of collision which was great when the carriers in a tight formation took independent evasive action, and to obtain air space for breaking up and rendezvousing carrier air groups. At this time, anti-aircraft fire and maneuverability were given almost equal weight in defense against air attack.

At 0530, August 7th while on a southeasterly course and into the wind, TG 61.1 launched ~~the~~ air cover for

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TG 61.2 which was approaching its designated landing areas at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. This air cover destroyed all Japanese seaplanes based at Tulagi. No Japanese land-based planes were discovered at the Guadalcanal air base.

Meanwhile at 0300 August 7th TG 61.2, the Amphibious Force, when fifteen miles southwest of Savo Island, deployed into two groups. Group X-ray proceeded to Lunga Roads off Guadalcanal; Group Yoke to Tulagi. At 0614, Fire Support Group Mike consisting of the SAN JUAN, MONSIEUR and BUCHANAN started shelling targets in Tulagi. Group Yoke arrived at the transport area off Tulagi at 0637. At 0617 Fire Support Group Love consisting of the VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, HULL, DEWEY, ELLET and WILSON started shelling targets at Guadalcanal. Group X-ray arrived at the transport area off Guadalcanal at 0650. Clouds and light rain cloaked the advance of the amphibious force. This resulted in complete surprise!

TITLE: THE ALLIED PLAN

The Allied plan for the offensive in the South Pacific originated with the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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and was made known by COMINCH to CINCPAC on July 2nd, 1942. Operations were to commence August 1st to accomplish its objective in three stages.

TASK ONE: Seize and occupy Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions. TASK TWO: Seize and occupy the remainder of the Solomons, Lae, Salamaua and the northeast coast of New Guinea. TASK THREE: Seize and occupy Rabaul and adjacent positions in the New Guinea, New Ireland area.

COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC recommended that the operation not be initiated until adequate air strength could be built up in the ~~the~~ respective areas and until sufficient transports and shipping could be obtained. They felt that the successful accomplishment of the operation was open to the gravest doubts. They therefore offered an alternate plan of infiltrating the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands until such time as bases could be developed to support the three stages of the basic plan in one continuous movement. The Joint Chiefs of Staff refused to defer operations already underway for TASK ONE for two reasons: One, it was necessary to stop without delay the enemy's

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him from  
southward advance and prevent becoming firmly  
established at Tulagi; and Two, enemy airfields on  
Guadalcanal ~~could prevent Allied bases operating~~  
at Santa Cruz and Espiritu Santo. <sup>establishment of</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to provide additional shipborne aircraft and additional surface forces, to increase replacement aircraft, and to provide one heavy bombardment group of thirty-five planes.

COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC then went ahead with the planned operations. COMSOPAC's plan was simple and direct. He planned to accomplish TASK ONE by seizing the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area with amphibious forces supported by air from bases in SOPAC and <sup>and from carriers -</sup> SOWESPAC. He did not expect to achieve surprise but relied on coverage of his aircraft -- carrier and land-based -- and the gunpower of his ships to defeat expected counterattacks.

TITLE: JAPANESE REACTION 0652,  
August 7th to 2400  
August 7th

The reaction of the Japanese unit commanders was instantaneous and correct. After intercepting, at 0652, the urgent dispatch from Commander Air Base Tulagi: "Enemy task force sighted", each of the

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five cruisers -- CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA headed for Rabaul.

Meanwhile, Commander Outer South Seas Force at Rabaul was studying the situation. He had been expecting an Allied attack in the Solomons area but not at this time.

At 0725, he received an amplifying report from Tulagi: "Enemy task force of twenty ships attacking Tulagi; undergoing severe bombings; landing preparations underway; help requested."

He continued to receive reports of a fierce naval bombardment, air bombing attacks and initial landings. At 0805, communications from Tulagi ceased. This situation confronted the Commander Outer South Seas Force: The attack on Tulagi was a complete surprise. The attack was in strength and was a serious menace to the Japanese positions in the Solomons, which must be given immediate help.

Air attacks on enemy transports and cargo ships would not be sufficient in the face of the Allied screening ships and carrier-based aircraft.

He concluded a bold offensive by surface ships was

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needed and prepared his counterattack.

Air searches, primarily to locate Allied carrier forces, were launched at 0700 and 0900 but their reconnaissance was restricted by weather; no enemy was sighted.

Commander Outer South Seas Force launched an air attack at 0900 consisting of twenty-seven land-attack planes and eighteen zero fighters to attack the Allied ships at Guadalcanal.

He launched a second air attack at 1045 composed of sixteen carrier-type bombers without fighter escort, to attack the same targets.

At 1440, Commander Eighth Fleet who was the senior flag officer in the area and the one most experienced with the operations, decided to command the contemplated cruiser force in person and hoisted his flag in the CHOKAI. He did this because he realized that the surface counterattack must be launched at once and he was due to be relieved as Commander of Outer South Seas Force shortly by Commander of 11th Fleet. His action in assuming command is considered correct.

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From the reports of his search planes and of his attacking planes Commander Outer South Seas Force was able to compile an intelligence summary at 1530. This summary gave him a rough idea of the composition of the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal but gave no information on the location of the Allied carriers. The summary listed twice too many transports present and far too few <sup>cruisers</sup> ~~carriers~~ and destroyers.

Commander Cruiser Force now decided that a night surface action was feasible. He would still have benefit of reconnaissance as well as of air attacks August 8th while en route to his objective.

At 1628, he departed Rabaul in his flag ship CHOKAI with the light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI and the only available destroyer the YUNAGI.

Clearing the harbor and steaming in Japanese Condition of Readiness ONE, Commander Cruiser Force ordered the four heavy cruisers comprising Crudiv Six - AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA - which had arrived off Rabaul, to join in column astern of the CHOKAI. He placed the YUBARI as a screen on

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the starboard bow of the CHOKAI and the TENRYU followed by the YUNAGI on the port bow, and headed towards Tulagi. At 1945, this force, while on course 1400(T), at high speed, was detected, unknown to its commander, by the Allied submarine S-38 eight miles west of Cape St. George but was not attacked. Prior to his departure from Rabaul Commander Outer South Seas Force ordered certain submarines of Sub-Ron 7 to proceed to Tulagi. The I-121 departed Rabaul at sunset, the I-123 departed Truk, the I-122 remained at Rabaul, the RO-33 was en route to Tulagi from its station in the Papua Sea.

TITLE: ALLIED OPERATIONS -  
0652 to 2400 August 7th

By 0652, the entire Amphibious Force had arrived on station at the objective area.

The Marines of the Tulagi Landing Group landed unopposed at 0800. And the Marines of the Guadalcanal Landing Group also made an unopposed landing at 0913. Gunfire support was provided by Fire Support Groups LOVE at Guadalcanal and MIKE at Tulagi. Air cover was provided by the planes of TG 61.1.

At about 1200, the Marines landed at Gavutu and encountered serious opposition which continued throughout the day.

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At 1325, the first Japanese air attack of twenty-seven Japanese bombers and eighteen fighters attacked the anchored transports at Guadalcanal but made no hits. At 1500, the second attack group closed the surface ships at Guadalcanal, making one hit on the MUGFORD.

These attacks delayed the unloading of supplies from transports and supply ships. At Tulagi and Gavutu the severe fighting ashore caused additional delay. CTF 62 pressed the urgency of unloading during the night, using necessary lights.

During August 7th, CTF 62 had been confronted by a number of enemy capabilities: Land-based aircraft had attacked him from Rabaul. Carrier-type bombers had attacked him and had withdrawn westward.

He could expect enemy submarines. Danger threatened his command from Japanese forces which could include carriers operating from Rabaul. He became concerned over the Allied searches in the direction of Rabaul. He knew that the next day the seaplane searches of CTF 63 would be extended in Sector IV 650 miles northeast of Maramasike Estuary but would reach no

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further west than 318°(T)

*in the direction of Rabaul*  
The northern search limit of CTF 63 reached to the southern tip of Choisel Island. Beyond that search depended on SOWESPAC planes.

At 1742 he requested CTF 63 to cover the sector 290 to 318 degrees from Malaita by a morning search. He stated that although COMSOWESPAC was responsible for this sector he felt that the situation required the additional search. CTF 62 by his request showed awareness of the changing situation. It was through this area the Japanese cruiser force passed without *undetected* detection on the following day by planes from TF 63.

Sunset was at 1816. The screening group then at 1830 assumed their night screening stations.

At 2400, August 7th, CTF 62 received a message from COMSOWESPAC reporting that his command had sighted, at 1231, four cruisers and one destroyer on a westerly course twenty-five miles north of Rabaul, as well as six unidentified ships on a southeastly course in St. George's Channel. This message was delayed in SOWESPAC eleven hours. These reports should have pointed out another Japanese capability -

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that of attacking TF 62 with a force of cruisers and destroyers.

**TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED  
SCREENING GROUP**

The Allied Screening Group was commanded by CTG 62.6, Rear Admiral V.A.C. Crutchley, R.N. His screening group was composed of three main groups plus two anti-submarine and radar pickets to give warning.

The AUSTRALIA Group, composed of the heavy cruisers AUSTRALIA and CANBERRA; the American cruiser CHICAGO and destroyers PATTERSON and BAGLEY and commanded by CTG 62.6 in person, took station with the three cruisers in column in the above order, distance 600 yards, speed twelve knots. This group patrolled back and forth at twelve knots in its assigned area south of a line 1250(T) from Savo Island and west of Longitude 1600-04' E. The PATTERSON screened the cruisers as an anti-submarine screen on the western flank; the BAGLEY on the eastern flank. The VINCENNES Group under the Commanding Officer VINCENNES was composed of the VINCENNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA in column in that order, distance 600 yards and screened by the JARVIS and HELM. This

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group steamed clockwise around a twenty-mile square at ten knots. It changed course 90° to the right every thirty minutes. Its patrol area was north of a line 125°(T) from Savo Island and west of Longitude 160°-04' E.

The SAN JUAN Group, commanded by CTG 62.4 was composed of the SAN JUAN and HOBART, screened by the MONSSEN and BUCHANAN. It patrolled its assigned area east of Longitude 160°-04' East along a north-south line ten miles long, at a speed of fifteen knots.

The anti-submarine and radar pickets, RALPH TALBOT and BLUE were on station to the westward and northward of Savo Island. Each patrolled for a distance of six and one half miles at twelve knots.

The remaining destroyers, SELFRIDGE, HENLEY, and MUGFORD remained with the transports as anti-submarine screens.

CTG 62.6 drew up this night disposition but left to each group commander's discretion the accomplishment of his mission within his own area. For their guidance he set forth two principles; firstly, that

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it was essential that an enemy force <sup>destroyed or</sup> be beaten off before it sighted or reached the convoy, and that ~~Allied forces be concentrated to avoid the confusion of a night action,~~ and secondly, that it was his aim to meet the enemy to seaward of the area between Savo Island and Sealark Channel and to remain interposed between the enemy and that area. He expected Allied air reconnaissance to give warning of enemy surface units.

CTG 62.6 stated further that if both the AUSTRALIA and VINCENNES groups were ordered to attack the enemy, the VINCENNES group should act independently of the AUSTRALIA group so as to give the greatest mutual support.

~~Also that destroyers of each group should concentrate under their particular senior officer and attack the enemy with torpedoes and gunfire as soon as the enemy was being effectively engaged by Allied cruisers.~~

If ordered to form a striking force, all destroyers less the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT, should concentrate under COMDESRON FOUR in the SELFRIDGE five miles

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northwest of Savo Island.

No provision was made in these instructions for night action in the event of a surprise raid by enemy surface ships that had gotten within gun range without detection, which is what happened at Savo Island.

Each screening group commander operated independently of the other group commanders. The Commander VINCENTNES Group notified other group commanders of his planned operations but was not in turn advised by them as to their planned operations.

CTG 62.6 stated that the reason for employing his cruisers in two separate groups was that his cruisers had not been with him prior to the rehearsals at the Fijis and because he never had had an opportunity to confer with or even meet the cruiser commanding officers nor had he been able to issue them his standing orders. Why he had not done so remains unclear.

TITLE: DISCUSSION OF NIGHT  
DISPOSITION

The radar and anti-submarine screen, consisting as it did of but two destroyers, the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT was inadequate. The timing of their patrols was not coordinated. As a consequence they were

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fourteen miles apart when the Japanese cruiser force passed between them.

Their SC radars were affected by the proximity to land, and had a reliable range of but four to ten miles.

The effectiveness of their anti-submarine sonic devices varied from a few hundred to two thousand yards.

Does it not appear that two additional destroyers, which could have been well spared from the inner screen, might have covered these deficiencies?

The RALPH TALBOT, being only five miles from the VINCENNES Group at her easternmost position, was not far enough away from that group to give adequate warning of an enemy approach. Time and space was not sufficient to shadow an enemy and report him frequently. This was true but to a lesser degree with the BLUE and the AUSTRALIA Group.

The division of the Western Screening Group into two equal screening groups -- three heavy cruisers and two destroyers each -- precluded the proper concentration of their total strength against Japanese

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forces threatening from the west. Each of these groups had less fighting strength than the reported Japanese cruiser concentration in the Rabaul area of four heavy cruisers and three light cruisers. It was possible for the VINCENNES and AUSTRALIA groups to be as much as seventeen miles apart, or to be so near, because of unknown currents, as to interfere with one another. This difficulty was visualized by Commander VINCENNES Group who objected to the disposition by dispatch to CTC 62.6. As a possible preferable solution, would it not have been wiser to have combined the six cruisers in one formation; changing course by column or by simultaneous ships turn?

This might have resulted in gunfire advantage with possible crossing of the "Tee", and would have facilitated avoiding torpedo attack by simple ship turns.

There would have been less confusion where American and Australian ships maneuvered together for the first time.

Interior lines would have permitted a maximum

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concentration to be quickly brought against an enemy attacking from the west.

Since but one flag officer was assigned to the western screening groups this formation would have placed all heavy ships under his command, and would have allowed individual ship commanders to give their full attention to fighting their ships. This, in night action, is of supreme importance.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTF 61  
(Commander Expeditionary Force)

CTF 61, who was responsible for the tactical operations of TASK ONE, remained in his flagship, the SARATOGA throughout the operations.

CTF 61 also served as CTG 61.1.1 under CTG 61.1 (Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes) who functioned as Officer-in-tactical Command of the Air Support Force in carrier WASP.

Since CTF 61 in the SARATOGA was far from the landing areas, he allowed CTG 61.2 to conduct amphibious operations according to plan and to exercise individual initiative to meet changing situations in Iron Bottom Sound and ashore with the landing force. Radio silence in the carriers possibly prevented more active control.

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CTF 61 kept himself informed of the operations of his task forces by radio interception, voice radio, visual signals or message drops.

Aware of attacks by carrier-based planes over Guadalcanal he suggested to CTG 61.1 that a morning air search be made toward Rabaul to detect a reported carrier. Concerned over the safety of his carriers he decided to retire them more to the eastward.

CTG 61.1's dawn launching position for August 8th which was 110 miles farther east than that on August 7th, was not well chosen for the search toward Rabaul to discover a Japanese aircraft carrier. Its point of origin should have been much farther to the west. Why did CTF 61 not choose such a western position?

He had already lost a number of fighters to Japanese planes. A more western position would place him within range of enemy land-based aircraft from Rabaul. At Coral Sea and Midway, he had lost two carriers. To him damage or loss of a carrier was not an acceptable risk.

But could he not have moved to the western position

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during the night, launched his search planes at dawn, and retired along a Point Option line to the southeast to recover his planes?

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTG 61.1

Meanwhile, CTG 61.1 operated under the directives issued by CTF 61. Besides providing air support and reconnaissance for landing operations, as well as combat air patrol for TF 62 and TG 61.1, he also provided air search and reconnaissance. The weather conditions were sky overcast, sea rough, flying conditions poor. He made visual searches; one, to reconnoiter Maramasike Estuary, which failed owing to bad weather; one, to search the sector 2700(T) to 0300(T) to a radius of 200 miles, (This flight contacted what he reported as a small oiler but it may have been the schooner reported later as a destroyer at Savo Island) and one to reconnoiter Maramasike Estuary which it found clear. During the days operations, TG 61.1 lost ten (10) fighters missing in action, and five (5) which crashed. It also lost one (1) dive bomber missing in action and one (1) which crashed.

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OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SUBMARINES

The S-38 off Cape St. George while submerged, contacted at 2000, five enemy ships heading south at high speed. The Commanding Officer reported this contact immediately to COMSOWESPACFOR. The contact report was finally received in SOPAC at 0738 the following morning after a delay of eleven hours and thirty-eight minutes. The force contacted was the Japanese Cruiser Force.

The S-44, en route to and off Steffen Strait made no contacts.

OPERATIONS OF CTF 63

CTF 63 searches were all negative. Sector I and the left half of Sector II were not searched because of bad weather.

OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER ALLIED  
AIR FORCES SOWESPAC

Air searches were all negative. However, a B-17 attack made on Rabaul at 1231 noted and reported to COMSOWESPAC a cruiser force just north of Rabaul consisting of one heavy cruiser, three light cruisers and one destroyer. This report was received in SOPAC at 2400 after a delay of eleven hours and twenty-nine minutes.

TITLE: THE JAPANESE REACTION  
0000 August 8th to  
2400 August 8th

Commander Cruiser Force continued toward Tulagi.

He knew that during the 8th he would have to make

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important decisions. He seems to have had no doubts as to success in the coming night action. He knew that he would receive more intelligence from Commander Fifth Air Attack Force. He planned to augment the land-based searches with his own scouting planes. He determined to close the Tulagi area to a position where he could do this and yet not seriously endanger his command to Allied counteraction by air. At the same time he desired to be near enough to Tulagi to permit the execution of his planned night attack should he determine to do so. If discovered, he planned to employ deceptive maneuvers so that the Allies could not guess his plan for night action. Therefore he decided to operate east of Bougainville during the morning of the 8th while his cruiser planes scouted. This area was three hundred miles from Tulagi and in his opinion beyond the range of carrier aircraft.

At 0600, he reached his selected forenoon operating area.

At 0625 he launched search planes from the heavy cruisers, CHOKAI, KINUGASA, KAKO and AOBA. The

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weather was excellent.

He then operated his cruiser force in two groups with the heavy cruisers dispersed to recover their aircraft. Cruiser planes were used for anti-submarine patrol.

At 1020, an Allied plane was sighted approaching from the southeast. Commander Cruiser Force headed N.W. and directed the cruisers to reform on his flagship at 1100.

At this time, about 1100, another enemy plane was observed. Commander Cruiser Force believed this was the same plane that had shadowed him since 1020. As the plane closed, apparently to obtain more information, the CHOKAI opened fire. The plane which was actually a second Australian Hudson operating out of an airfield at Fall River, retired at 1200 and disappeared.

Between 1036 and 1200 all planes were recovered. The ACBA pilot, who reconnoitered the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, reported the forces in the Lunga Point Area consisted of one battleship, four cruisers, seven destroyers, one ship resembling an

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escort carrier, and fifteen transports. And in the Tulagi area: two heavy cruisers, twelve destroyers, and three transports underway in the vicinity of Tulagi lighthouse. This intelligence was surprisingly accurate but neither the battleship nor the escort carrier were present.

Commander Cruiser Force now re-estimated the situation.

Allied surface forces in Iron Bottom Sound were greater than his own force, if concentrated against him. But their division between Tulagi and Guadalcanal was a factor in his favor.

He had just been located by an Allied reconnaissance plane and he believed his position reported, but he hoped his deceptive tactics of heading northwest while under observation, would confuse the Allied commanders as to his intentions.

He knew the FIFTH Air Attack Force would strike the Allies about noon and he could expect a summary of the results of both reconnaissance and attacks at about 1530.

He decided to carry out his planned night attack.

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At 1300 he headed south at 24 knots. His decision was bold.

For if he had underestimated the intelligence or aggressiveness of the Allied carrier force commander, he was putting himself in a position to be bombed by carrier planes before sunset.

By 1600 he had traversed Bougainville Strait and had turned into the "Slot".

He had committed his force; only two and one half hours remained before sunset.

Wishing more information as to Allied strength and disposition and wishing to know the extent of damage done by Japanese bombers on August 8th, and not having received a report as yet from Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force, he at 1612 dispatched another plane from the AOBA to reconnoiter Tulagi.

At 1640 Commander Cruiser Force issued his instructions for night action in substance as follows:

1. During the night the cruising disposition will consist of a main body (CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA) at distance 1000 meters, and a vanguard stationed 3000 meters ahead of the

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CHOKAI with the TENRYU and YUNAGI to port, the YUBARI to starboard.

2. Before the rush-in (approach) the vanguard will check any enemy small craft while the main body heads southward.
3. At the time of the rush-in all ships will form battle column with 1200 meters between ships.  
Order of ships: CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA, TENRYU, YUBARI, YUNAGI.
4. In the approach the cruiser force will first pass south of Savo Island, will torpedo the main enemy force at Guadalcanal Anchorage, then head toward Tulagi Anchorage to shell and torpedo the enemy there, then will withdraw north of Savo Island. Each commanding officer will act independently as regards gun and torpedo firing.
5. Each ship will display white sleeves on each side of the bridge for recognition purposes.
6. Speed will be twenty-four knots at the time of the rush-in.

It will be noted that the objective of this attack was the Allied shipping at Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

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Sunset was at 1816.

At 1840, Commander Cruiser Force exhorted his command: "Let us attack with certain victory in the traditional night attack of the Imperial Navy. May each one calmly do his utmost."

At 1910 evening twilight ended. At 1915 signal flares were shot off to guide back the AOBA plane but it failed to return.

At 2100, Commander Cruiser Force received the report which he had expected at 1530 from Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force. This report, which was highly erroneous, stated that Japanese bombers had sunk two heavy cruisers, one large cruiser, two destroyers and nine transports and had badly damaged one heavy cruiser and two transports which had been left burning.

This news was very heartening to Commander Cruiser Force because it indicated that the surface opposition which he might meet on night attack had been reduced considerably. He decided that he could safely make his planned night attack. Following Japanese night attack doctrine, he now dispatched

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two planes at 2313 to illuminate the transports when the CHOKAI had closed to twenty miles and further to report the disposition of the Allied forces.

Between 2342 and 2355 he sighted the fires of the GEORGE F. ELLIOT, and of land installations near Tulagi. At 2400, the Cruiser Force was thirty-seven miles from the southwest entrance to Iron Bottom Sound.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER  
FIFTH AIR ATTACK FORCE

Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force designed searches to cover areas in which Allied carriers would probably be operating 0900(T) to 1450(T) to a radius of seven hundred miles. *from P. Paul*

At 0540 the first of two flying boats took off to search to seven hundred miles radius, followed at 0636 by the second. At 0700 three land-attack planes departed Rabaul to search a radius of seven hundred miles between 1100(T) and 1400(T). At the outer end of their search each plane flew a sixty miles cross-leg to the left, and then returned to Rabaul. No contact was made with TG 61.1. Pilots had encountered overcast but their failure to locate carriers

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must have been confusing to Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force.

At 0740 Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force launched a torpedo attack group of twenty-three (23) land attack planes escorted by fifteen (15) fighters to attack the Allied shipping off Tulagi-Guadalcanal. This group at 1200 struck its target. The Japanese reported having lost nineteen planes shot down and missing. This report was five greater than the Allied estimate of fourteen planes.

TITLE: ALLIED OPERATIONS 0000 -  
2400 August 8th  
OPERATIONS OF CTF 62 -  
AMPHIBIOUS FORCE COMMAND-  
ER

Under CTF 62 (Rear Admiral R.K. Turner) the Amphibious Force throughout the night of the 7th-8th continued unloading operations. Losses at Tulagi were high. Reinforcements were requested. The unloading of Squadron X-RAY was discontinued because of the congestion of stores on Guadalcanal Beach. And the unloading of Squadron YOKE was held up at Tulagi by opposition ashore. By 0632, the day screening disposition had been assumed.

At 0738, CTF 62 received word from COMSOWESPAC that

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at 1100 the preceding day, one destroyer and two unknown ships had passed through Lat. 04°-58' (S) Long. 152°-50' (E) at high speed, course 140°(T), and that at 2000 the same day two destroyers and three larger unknown ships had passed at high speed through the same point on the same course. The latter contact was the Japanese Cruiser Force en route to attack TF 62; but its composition and destination could not be determined by CTF 62 from this report.

At 1027 an Australian coast watcher reported an enemy air attack coming. The transports in both areas X-RAY and YOKE got underway to repel this attack. At 1200 TF 62 was attacked by Japanese planes. The transport GEORGE F. ELLIOTT and the destroyer JARVIS were hit.

At 1355, CTF 62 received warning of another attack and directed his transports to again get underway in anti-aircraft disposition. The attack did not develop. Returning to their anchorages, the transports and cargo ships resumed unloading at 1650. At 1500, CTF 62 learned of the capture of the

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Guadalcanal air base. This field would provide a base for shore-based planes when it was restored to operating condition. Actually it was not ready for use until 2015, August 10th.

At 1807 he intercepted a dispatch wherein CTF 61 recommended to COMSOPACFOR the immediate withdrawal of the carriers one day earlier than had been anticipated. He became seriously concerned, as without carrier-based air cover, his unloading operations would become very precarious.

At 1900 he intercepted a dispatch from Pearl Harbor that two enemy destroyers, three cruisers and two seaplane tenders or gunboats had been contacted by a SOWESPAC aircraft at 1025 that day, Lat. 05°-49' (S), Long. 159°-07' (E). This report was of course in error as the force contacted actually consisted of five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and one destroyer. CTF 62 concluded that this force, much weaker than his own, was destined for Rekata Bay to reinforce the small Japanese seaplane tender group there, and that a night attack on Tulagi-Guadalcanal was improbable. In estimating this

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situation, it is clear that CTF 62 studied the enemy's intentions rather than their capabilities and in so doing overlooked one of the most dangerous enemy capabilities - that of night attack.

CTF 62 held a conference at 2325 aboard his flagship, the McCANLEY, anchored in Transport Area X-RAY to determine whether sufficient stores were ashore to support the Marines should he decide to retire TF 62, and whether CTG 62.6 thought that his screening ships could hold out for several days without carrier support. Attending were Commanding General First Marine Division, Major General A.A. Vandegrift, and CTG 62.6. The latter commander in the AUSTRALIA had left the AUSTRALIA Group at 2055 and had notified the Commanding Officer of the CHICAGO of his departure. However, he failed to notify his next in command who was the Commanding Officer VINCENTES with the VINCENTES Group, and failed to inform his other commanders of his departure. He thus not only left his command without any over-all commander whatsoever in the screening areas, but he also left most of them without any knowledge of his absence.

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The Commanding Officer CHICAGO directed the CANBERRA to lead the formation possibly because he expected no enemy action that night, possibly because he was tired, and possibly because he expected the AUSTRALIA to return before morning. His action in so doing was not sound, as a commander must always be alert to insure for his command every possible advantage. At the conference, all commanders agreed with CTF 62's opinion as to the improbability of a night attack by the Japanese surface force and of the probability of increased air attacks from Rekata Bay. They also agreed however, reluctantly, on the need to withdraw transports and cargo ships at first light, 0600, if enough supplies for the Marine shore operations could be landed before departure. The Commanding General, First Marine Division went ashore at 2345 to check the supply situation at Tulagi. Until CTF 62 had this supply information he could make no final decision nor make recommendations to CTF 61 or COMSOPACFOR. CTF 62 did not know that the Commanding General First Marine Division would not return to the McCARTLEY until 0800

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the next morning.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTF 61 -  
COMMANDER EXPEDITIONARY  
FORCE

On August 8th, CTF 61 made searches from his carriers, but he made no contacts on enemy carriers, which were his greatest concern. The ENTERPRISE reported that its fighter pilots over Tulagi had encountered Japanese twin-engined torpedo planes and twin-engined horizontal bombers. CTF 61 sent to CTG 61.1 by visual signal: "In view of possibility of torpedo plane attack and reduction in our present fighter strength, I intend to recommend immediate withdrawal of carriers. Do you agree?"

CTG 61.1 replied in the affirmative.

To COMSOPACFOR he sent at 1807: "Fighter strength reduced from 99 to 78. In view of large number of enemy torpedo and bomber planes in the area, recommend immediate withdrawal of carriers. Request you send tankers immediately to rendezvous decided by you as fuel running low."

Was he justified in this recommendation, when the seizure of the objective areas was far from achieved? Certainly his information of the situation in Iron Bottom Sound and particularly the logistics situation

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was insufficient to make this recommendation. He failed to consult his subordinate CTG 62, who was conducting the amphibious operations, but did consult CTG 61.1, who was simply providing air support. This failure is made conspicuous by the fact that he knew that the success of the landing operation would depend on air superiority which could be only maintained at this time by his carrier planes. He knew that success in battle is rarely accomplished without some losses. He believed that he had lost twenty-one fighters when he had, in fact, lost but sixteen. He therefore had eighty-three fighters remaining which is more than he had when he entered the Battle of Midway.

Although the fuel within his command was diminishing daily, it was not so critically low as to force his retirement from the area. It seems clear therefore that he did not desire to expose his carriers to air attack, even though his departure might jeopardize the entire Tulagi-Guadalcanal operation for which he was responsible, and might prevent the inauguration of TASK TWO which the Joint Chiefs

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desired to expedite.

At about 1845, CTF 61 received the dispatch reporting the three cruisers, three destroyers and two seaplane tenders or gunboats. He appears to have given this message little or no consideration.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTG 61.1 -  
COMMANDER AIR SUPPORT  
FORCE

Throughout the 8th, CTG 61.1 supported the landing operations and surface forces in Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. Flying conditions were excellent.

He provided air cover for his own forces, and provided air searches to augment the searches of CTF 63. His morning air searches were negative except for the shooting down of an enemy twin-float seaplane north of Rekata Bay.

He launched an afternoon search of fourteen torpedo planes to search to the northwest to a radius of two hundred miles. The two planes to the westward searched to 260 miles - the remaining twelve searched 220 miles. It is unfortunate, from the Allied viewpoint, that the third search plane from the west did not also search to a 260 mile radius. Had it done so, it would at 1612, have passed over the Japanese cruiser force. As it was, it missed

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this contact by a mere thirty miles.

CTF 61.1 lost one fighter, which crashed, in the days operations. This made a total of sixteen fighters for two days operations.

TITLE: OPERATIONS CTF 63 -  
COMMANDER AIRCRAFT SOUTH  
PACIFIC FORCE

On August 8th, Sector I and the right half of Sector II were not searched because of bad weather. The left half of Sector II was only searched to 650 miles instead of to the planned 750 miles. But even then it would not have discovered the Japanese Cruiser Force, which did not enter the sector until 1900.

Sectors III, V, VI, VII were searched with negative results.

Sector IV was searched by patrol planes moved to Maramasike Estuary from Espiritu Santo. The special sector search requested by CTF 62 appears to have been made by two B-17s from Espiritu Santo which searched to about 315 miles beyond Malaita Island. This search was ineffective because the Japanese were sixty miles to the northwest of the outer limit of this search.

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TITLE: OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER  
ALLIED AIR FORCES,  
SOWESPAC

To support SOPAC, Commander Allied Air Forces,  
SOWESPAC sent out air searches of ~~four~~<sup>THREE</sup> B-17's from  
Port Moresby and ~~three~~<sup>FOUR</sup> Hudsons from Fall River. One  
Hudson made contact with the Japanese Cruiser Force  
at 1025 and reported it as three heavy cruisers,  
three destroyers and two seaplane tenders or gun-  
boats.

That the pilot did not trail this contact but pro-  
ceeded instead to return directly to base seems clear,  
for an hour later he bombed the Japanese submarine  
I-121 in a position on a direct line to Milne Bay.  
His bomb missed. The contact report reporting both  
the cruiser force and the submarine contact does  
not appear to have been made during flight but was  
instead, made after return to base. This report  
was in error regarding the numbers and recognition  
of the enemy cruiser force. The force actually  
consisted of five heavy cruisers, two light crui-  
sers, and one destroyer. This error had a profound  
effect on the decisions of CTF 62 and COM 62.6.  
This contact report owing to numerous delays in  
transmission arrived in the SOPAC Area between

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1843 and 1845 or eight hours and twenty minutes after it had been made.

At 1101, the pilot of another Hudson contacted the same Japanese Cruiser Force reporting it as two heavy or light cruisers and one unidentified vessel. He trailed the force for an hour. At this time, all five heavy cruisers were scattered recovering planes. The report of this contact was received by COMSOPACFOR at 2136 or ten and one half hours after it had been made. The long delays in the delivery of these reports to COMSOPAC prevented that officer requesting immediate air attack by SOWESPAC planes, and denied the Air Support Force an opportunity of attacking the Japanese force.

Unfortunately, communications were dependent on the Royal Australian Air Force, whose personnel seem to have become complacent because they could not take offensive action prior to influx of American forces. Hence, they were slow in responding to the urgency of a situation. Had an American naval liaison communications officer been provided at each of the bases in the Northeastern Area, it is possible that these delays might have been avoided.

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TITLE: BATTLE OF SAVO  
ISLAND - August 9th -  
FORCES ENGAGED

Ships are shown  
and labelled

TITLE: STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS  
FACTORS

These were the forces engaged:

In the Allied screen two destroyers; in the CHICAGO Group two heavy cruisers, two destroyers; in the VINCENTES Group three heavy cruisers, two destroyers; total five heavy cruisers, six destroyers. The Japanese Cruiser Force totalled five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, one destroyer.

The strength factors of the Allied Force were:

- 1) Radar; more and more modern destroyers (six to one);
  - 2) more 8-inch guns (44 to 34); cruisers had more life (27 to 23.6);
  - 3) cruisers generally superior to the Japanese cruisers;
  - 4) close support nearby (three cruisers and five destroyers);
  - 5) more torpedo tubes in destroyers (96 to 6);
  - 6) more 4.7-inch and 5-inch guns than the enemy's 4.7-inch and 5.5-inch.
- The Weakness Factors: Forces separated so that they could be destroyed piecemeal; commanders of different groups not familiar with one another's plan;
- 3) personnel worn out after two days in the combat area;
  - 4) no flag officers present;
  - 5) no battle plan.
- 6) Lack of correct intelligence concerning composition of enemy cruiser force.

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1 Night attack not anticipated by high command.

**TITLE: STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS  
FACTORS - JAPANESE  
CRUISER FORCE**

The Japanese strength factors were: Surprise;  
initiative; more light cruisers (2 to 0); more  
torpedo tubes in cruisers (58 to 8); better  
trained in night operations; ship-based aircraft  
were well trained for night flying; familiar with  
the combat area; freedom of action; more war  
experience; forces were concentrated; however,  
their weakness lay in that they were non homogeneous;  
enemy forces were stronger than expected; own  
forces had not operated together.

Thus the Allies had material superiority; the  
Japanese morale and tactical superiority.

**TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE  
JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE  
0000 to 0132 August 9th  
THE APPROACH**

The Japanese Cruiser Force continued toward Tulagi  
at twenty-four knots on course 120°(T). All ships  
were in condition of Readiness ONE.

At exactly 0000 August 9th, Commander Cruiser Force  
changed course to 148°(T) went to twenty-six knots  
and assumed battle formation; a simple column  
consisting of the flagship CHOKAI (FF), followed  
by CRUDEV SIX (the AOMA (F), KAKO, KINUGASA,

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FURUTAKA), CRUDDY EIGHTEEN (the TERRYU (F), YUBARI) and with the YUNAGI bringing up the rear. At 0025 he sent to his force a message received from one of his illuminating planes: "Three enemy cruisers south of Savo Island, course 290 (T), speed 18." and immediately ordered: "Prepare to fire torpedoes."

At 0053 he sighted a destroyer which was also sighted by the AORA directly astern.

This was the BLUE, which even with radar, failed to detect his approach.

The manifest superiority of the Japanese night detection appears to have been due to better night glasses, to fatigue of Allied lookouts, and to unwarranted reliance on radar.

Somewhat surprised at the appearance of the BLUE, Commander Cruiser Force had two apparent courses of action: The first, to continue on to endeavor to surprise the three cruisers reported to the south; the second, to change course to the north channel and endeavor to pass into Iron Bottom Sound without discovery. He chose the latter course.

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At 0103 he sighted a two-masted schooner which he mistook for another destroyer. This caused him to re-estimate the situation. A second destroyer was part of the patrol across the entrance. There now would be no advantage entering the North Channel which would be likewise patrolled. It would be wise to strike immediately.

But both destroyers -- the BLUE and the schooner -- were withdrawing to the southwest. Either they had not discovered him or were taking no action except to report his progress.

He directed the CHOKAI to turn to course 150°(T) and signalled "Enter by the south passage." He decided to withhold fire, maintain silence and trust to chance.

This was a wise decision. His presence was unknown. Commencing at 0112 he changed course by follow-the-leader tactics to swing around Savo Island to course 110°(T).

At 0124 he changed course to avoid a cloud mass that obscured the southern end of Savo Island. At 0126 he signalled "Proceed independently."

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He did this because his ships had not operated together before, and he thought it wise to allow his division commanders to maneuver their divisions independently. In so doing, he of course realized that this might have disadvantages as night combat operations are difficult and if forces are not kept together, melees often result.

At 0128½ he changed course to 130°(T) and at 0132 to 095°(T) passing Savo Island three miles on his port beam.

The other ships followed in column.

Why Commander Cruiser Force persisted in swinging to an easterly course is not explained. His correct course was to head for the transports at Guadalcanal and not to engage the Allied cruisers except as necessary to get at the transports. Perhaps he was endeavoring to discover the Allied cruisers prior to his rush-in to the transports.

**TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED  
SCREENING GROUP 0000 to  
0132 August 9th**

The Allied ships, engaged in the patrol, were cruising their assigned stations in four groups. The BLUE, on her radar and anti-submarine station, was in condition of Readiness TWO. The weather was

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cloudy, sea calm, visibility 8000 yards as reported by BLUE. This was less than the visibility demonstrated by the Japanese, for the BLUE was sighted by the CHOKAI distant 8700 yards, and by the succeeding ships including the FURUTAKA at 11,000 yards. The BLUE failed to see these ships, and failed to see the two masted schooner, which was 9000 yards distant. The BLUE's radar was operative but not effective.

PLATE IV

In the CHICAGO Group the CANBERRA and the CHICAGO screened by the PATTERSON and BAGLEY made no contacts. All ships were in condition of Readiness TWO.

At this time, the VINCENTNES Group -- the VINCENTNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA -- was in column screened by the HELM and WILSON. This group which had been set by currents to the southeast was endeavoring to regain its correct position. It was in Condition of Readiness TWO. The RALPH TALBOT patrolled her picket line in Condition of Readiness TWO. She failed to sight the enemy, during their "rush-in", and she was not sighted by them.

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The SAN JUAN Group consisting of the SAN JUAN and HOBART in column and screened by the BUCHANAN and MONSSEN made no contacts. The general surface visibility to the eastward of this group was one mile and the visibility to the westward was one to three miles. Rain squalls were close at hand.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE  
CRUISER FORCE 0132 August  
9th to 0150  
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO  
GROUP

At 0132 Commander of Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI commenced his rush-in and signalled the order; "All ships attack."

At 0134 he sighted an Allied destroyer the JARVIS range 3000 yards on his port bow. One minute later both the AOBA and KAKO also sighted this destroyer which was en route to an Australian port for repairs. The Japanese Cruiser Force trained its guns but held its fire. Presumably the Japanese doctrine was not to open fire until the flagship had done so. It will be remembered that the operation order specified that only torpedoes were to be fired against the shipping at Guadalcanal and that gunfire together with torpedoes would be employed against Tulagi.

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The JARVIS did not report the Japanese ships, apparently because her radio installation was inoperative.

At 0136, Commander Cruiser Force sighted the CANBERRA and CHICAGO distant 12,500 yards. He changed course to close and gave the order: "Independent firing."

From now on the Japanese Cruiser Force was strung out in column, proceeding independently by divisions, firing independently by ships. In this case, the CHOKAI acted as a division as did CRUDIV SIX, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the YUNAGI.

Because of the varying visibility and 1300 yards distance between his ships in column, Commander Cruiser Force recognized the difficulty of correct station keeping. Also he was aware that control from a flagship of target designation and fire distribution was difficult during a night attack. He was also aware that in surprise attack targets of opportunity might present themselves to individual ships.

At 0137 the CHOKAI sighted the VINCENT 18,000

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yards away, leading its column formation toward the CHOKAI. This was the greatest distance for visual sighting during the action. The VINCENTES may have been silhouetted by the fires at Tulagi, or by lightning.

At 0138, the CHOKAI fired four port torpedoes at the CANBERRA and CHICAGO, which ships were in a favorable position to avoid being hit and were poor targets. All torpedoes missed. At about 0140 she sighted four ships of the CHICAGO Group, changed course to cross the "Tee" and to unmask her own batteries as well as those of the ships astern and continued to close the CHICAGO Group.

At this time, the last ship in column, the YUNAGI, sighted the American destroyer JARVIS, 3000 yards to port, trying to escape. The Commanding Officer, YUNAGI decided to attack the JARVIS rather than continue on. He did not consult Commander Cruiser Force. This decision is questionable in view of the YUNAGI's basic mission, to destroy transports. Flares were dropped by Japanese cruiser planes over Transport Area X-Ray making the CHICAGO Group an excellent target.

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The CHOKAI commenced firing at 0143 with her 8-inch battery. Her gunfire was impressive.

The fifth ship in column, the FURUTAKA also at 0143 launched four port torpedoes apparently at the CHICAGO and commenced firing her guns but is is not clear at which cruiser. One minute later she was having steering difficulty caused by her own gunfire.

The AOBA closed the range to 4200 at 0144, opened fire on the CANBERRA with her 8-inch battery and fired three starboard torpedoes also at the CANBERRA, all of which missed.

After heavily damaging the CANBERRA and CHICAGO, Commander Cruiser Force did not close transport Area X-RAY but settled on a course 0500(T) to close the VINCENNES Group.

Why he did this is not clear, for his assigned target was the transport group at Guadalcanal - not the VINCENNES Group. By deciding not to attack the transports at this time he lost an opportunity to convert a tactical success into a strategic victory.

At 0144, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN, with the TENRYU and YUBARI, changed course away from the CHICAGO Group

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to avoid action with heavy cruisers.

As a result of the above movements, the Japanese Cruiser Force now fell into two groups - the Eastern Group, CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA and the Western Group, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN plus the FURUTAKA.

The YUNAGI operated by herself without informing Commander Cruiser Force of her operations.

TITLE: APPROACH TO THE  
VINCENNES GROUP

Both cruiser groups proceeded northward; the Eastern Group to engage the VINCENNES Group; the Western Group to be in a supporting position.

At 0146, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN noted that the glare of illuminating flares revealed five cruisers. At this time, the KAKO fired three torpedoes at the CHICAGO which she thought was a battleship, opened fire with her guns and changed course to follow the AOBA, the division flagship, which was making an S-turn to the northeast. She fired one 8-inch salvo at a cruiser of the KENT-class, the CANBERRA, after which her main battery could not bear, being up against the stops.

The FURUTAKA, at about 0146, fired one starboard torpedo at the PATTERSON while at the same time

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striving to extricate herself with her damaged steering gear from a possible collision with the CANBERRA. At 0147 $\frac{1}{2}$  he opened fire on the CANBERRA. COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN, at 0147, illuminated the PATTERSON with searchlights, opened fire, and considered that she was sunk. Actually, she was not sunk but was seriously damaged.

At 0148, the CHOKAI fired her four starboard torpedoes at the VINCENNES 9500 yards away then headed toward Transport Area YOKE at Tulagi, but did this more to close the VINCENNES Group than to attack the shipping at Tulagi.

At 0149 the FURUTAKA fired her three remaining starboard torpedoes at the CANBERRA. All missed. Up to this time, the Japanese cruiser force had fired a total of seventeen torpedoes at the CHICAGO and CANBERRA and one at the PATTERSON and claimed hits. Actually only two hits were made.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED  
SCREENING GROUP 0132 to  
0150 August 9th.  
ACTION OF THE CHICAGO  
GROUP WITH JAPANESE  
CRUISERS

At 0132 the CHICAGO Group at twelve knots neared the northern end of its patrol line. All ships were in condition of Readiness TWO.

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None of the Commanding Officers with the exception of the PATTERSON were awake. All knew of the 1025 contact report of the Japanese forces off Bougainville.

The ships were about a mile and a half off the cloud bank which had formed southeast of Savo Island. The Japanese reported the visibility augmented by the illuminating flares as excellent to the southeast. The CHICAGO Group on the other hand reported low visibility with visibility ranging from 4000 yards to zero in the rain squalls.

The Japanese lookouts had the advantage of knowing what they were looking for; they were equipped and trained for night operations. Hence their visual sightings outdistanced the Allied electronic and visual detection.

TITLE: ACTION BY CANBERRA

At 0143, the port lookout on the CANBERRA sighted a ship dead ahead. Since the bridge could not verify the contact, the Commanding Officer and the Navigator were called. They arrived on the bridge in a matter of seconds. The ship went to General Quarters.

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At 0143 $\frac{1}{2}$ , the CANBERRA sighted four torpedoes, two on either side passing clear. These were the CHOKAI torpedoes fired at 0138. The Commanding Officer changed course to comb the torpedo tracks. He realized this maneuver would force him to fight a reverse action and would permit the enemy to pass into the transport area so, when he could, he changed course to starboard to interpose his command between the transports and the enemy cruisers.

He did not advise his immediate superior in the CHICAGO Group of his contact with the enemy, nor did he advise the Commander VINCENNES Group or CTG 62.6 or CTF 62. This lack of information contributed to the destruction of the VINCENNES Group.

Between 0144 and 0148 the ship received twenty-four hits. She tried to return fire but was disabled and almost defenseless. Her Commanding Officer was mortally wounded, her Gunnery Officer killed.

The Executive Officer assumed command. The CANBERRA now assumed an ever-increasing list to starboard. At about 0146 she observed additional torpedoes approaching her which had been fired by the AOBA. All missed.

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TITLE: ACTION BY CHICAGO

At 0145 the CHICAGO noted the CANBERRA swinging to starboard.

The Officer-of-the-Deck then noted two dark objects between the CANBERRA and PATTERSON and another to the right of the CANBERRA.

He sounded General Quarters which brought the Commanding Officer on deck immediately.

He did not broadcast the presence of enemy ships to the Task Force over TBS voice radio nor to the Commander VINCENNES Group, nor to CTG 62.6 who remained over-all Screening Commander even though he was located for the moment in Transport Area X-RAY. He did not notify CTF 61, CTF 62, nor COMSOPACFOR. He also failed in his responsibilities as Commander CHICAGO Group. He knew the CANBERRA was familiar with the situation because she was maneuvering for position. But what about the BAGLEY and PATTERSON? He did not give orders to his four ships as Officer-in-Tactical Command nor lead them into battle. Instead he allowed each ship to operate independently. Perhaps he was unable to perform the dual function of Group Commander and Commanding Officer. He may

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have forgotten that he was Group Commander. His failure to exercise command properly greatly contributed to the unfortunate events which were to follow in Iron Bottom Sound.

The Commanding Officer took evasive action against detected torpedo wakes by swinging to starboard and then to port. But the CHICAGO was struck by two torpedoes on her starboard side which she had previously failed to observe. These had been fired by the KAKO. One torpedo was a "dud" - the other blew off a small part of the CHICAGO's bow.

The CHICAGO then fired four-gun salvos of star shells which through error in fuse-setting, failed to explode. At 0148, the CHICAGO received her first shell hit, which struck the starboard leg of her foremast, causing interference with the radar antenna.

At 0149 the CHICAGO observed the PATTERSON engaging two destroyers. These were the TENRYU and YUBARI.

TITLE: ACTION BY BAGLEY

The BAGLEY at 0144 sighted a number of unidentified ships close to Savo Island.

She observed shell splashes land short of the CANNIBERRA which was then hit; a heavy concentration of

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fire followed.

The Commanding Officer BAGLEY did not report this contact to his immediate superior. This was unfortunate as enemy contacts are of vital importance to the entire command with priority over all other considerations.

The BAGLEY went to General Quarters and attempted to launch torpedoes from her starboard battery. She swung left and increased speed to twenty-five knots. But she went completely past her safe firing bearings before primers could be inserted. She then continued to swing to bring her port battery to bear. This swing to port rather than to starboard is questionable for by so doing the BAGLEY not only interfered with the CANBERRA but she also removed herself from an interposing position between the Japanese cruisers and the transports.

At 0149 she steadied on a northeasterly course, fired four torpedoes which missed, and again turned to port to scan the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. This also was a move of doubtful correctness as the BAGLEY had not been released by

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Commander CHICAGO Group and properly belonged with that group. Perhaps the Commanding Officer BAGLEY felt that the Commander CHICAGO Group could not exercise tactical command over his ships in this emergency.

TITLE: ACTION BY PATTERSON

The Commanding Officer, PATTERSON who was on the bridge when contact with the FURUTAKA was made, sounded "General Quarters" and tried to signal the CHICAGO and CANBERRA by blinker signal and other ships by TBS voice radio: "Warning! Warning! Strange ships entering harbor." He then turned to port to unmask his starboard gun and torpedo batteries but the Torpedo Officer failed to hear his firing order.

Observing two other cruisers on true bearing 340°, the Commanding Officer over the TBS radio on the bridge sent out: "All ships, warning! Warning! These ships inside Savo Island." He was the only Commanding Officer in the CHICAGO Group who tried to inform the interested commanders of initial contact with the enemy.

The PATTERSON then evaded the single torpedo fired by the FURUTAKA, and employing star shells for

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illumination, opened fire on the TENRYU and YUBARI. Although she was being illuminated by enemy searchlights and received a direct hit, she managed to score several light hits on the YUBARI.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE VIN-  
CENNES GROUP - 0152 to  
0150

During the engagement with the CHICAGO Group the VINCENNES Group continued its patrol in unalerted condition. All commanding officers were fully dressed and asleep in their emergency cabins. On the basis of the RAAF contacts, the Commanding Officer VINCENNES in estimating the situation, had entered in his log the enemy capability of proceeding with this cruiser force at high speed and attacking during current midwatch.

He did not alert the other ships of his group to this possibility of night action. This was a fatal omission for he was the Group Commander.

Weather conditions were dark and overcast with light rain, average visibility 10,000 yards. The ships of the VINCENNES Group at this time feared submarine attack. No submarines were present.

At 0145, flares were observed in Area X-RAY and gunfire was seen to the southwest. The CHICAGO

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Group was silhouetted. When notified, the Commanding Officer VINCENNES came on the bridge.

He observed the star shells fired by the PATTERSON which appeared to be under fire. Seeing no other ships or gunfire, the Group Commander concluded at 0147 that the CHICAGO Group had contacted an enemy destroyer which was trying to draw his group (VINCENNES) out of position, so the Main Japanese Attack Force might pass through his sector to attack the transports.

At this time, the PATTERSON's second contact report: "Warning! Warning! Three enemy ships south of Savo Island" was being broadcast. It was heard in the VINCENNES by the TBS radio operator but not passed to the bridge. The VINCENNES operator was sending out a course change at this time.

The VINCENNES went to Condition of Readiness ONE at 0148 by order of the Commanding Officer who directed this order to the VINCENNES alone.

At 0148, the QUINCY observed silhouettes of three cruisers, the leading ship with three turrets forward and therefore enemy. This information was not

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sent to the QUINCY's Gunnery Officer, nor did the QUINCY's Commanding Officer, recognizing unfriendly ships, broadcast this information.

But Commander VINCENNES Group studied the situation. He felt that no heavy enemy ships were being engaged by the CHICAGO Group for the latter would have illuminated and engaged them. His present course was taking his ships beyond the best position for intercepting possible threat through the north channel but, as he felt that he might be called on to support the CHICAGO Group, he desired to continue on. So he held his course and increased his speed at 0149½ to fifteen knots.

As the QUINCY and VINCENNES were shifting from Condition of Readiness TWO to Readiness ONE, they were illuminated by Japanese searchlights. The ASTORIA was also illuminated but did not as yet go to General Quarters.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF BLUE AND  
RALPH TALBOT

The BLUE, observing the flares and the firing, went to General Quarters and stood by for orders. She tried to report some enemy planes which she had observed but she could only raise the RALPH TALBOT.

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The RALPH TALBOT had heard the PATTERSON's TBS warning and had gone to General Quarters. She continued her patrol.

**TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6**

CTG 62.6 returned to his flagship, AUSTRALIA, after his conference with CTF 62. He decided not to return to the Western Screening Group but rather to remain within the Transport Screen until morning. He failed to notify the Commanders of the VINCENNES and CHICAGO Groups as well as CTF 62 of this decision. He noted the aircraft flares at about 0145 and estimated that the enemy were executing an attack on the transports by either submarine or aircraft. He excluded a night surface ship attack.

*from his estimate*

**TITLE: OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE  
CRUISER FORCE - 0150 to  
0200 August 9th  
ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE  
EASTERN GROUP AND VIN-  
CENNES GROUP**

Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI was leading the Japanese Eastern Group. The AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA still chose to follow the CHOKAI.

Presented with a rare opportunity to destroy the shipping at Tulagi, Commander Cruiser Force ignored this original objective and assigned himself a new one - the destruction of the VINCENNES Group. He did not notify his command of his change in objective.

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His approach was entirely unsuspected. The first ship sighted was the ASTORIA whose guns were not trained out and he realized that he had gained surprise.

The CHOKAI, AOBA and KAKO employed their searchlights intermittently to illuminate the ASTORIA, QUINCY and VINCENTES. Their guns had previously been trained.

Observing the state of unreadiness of the ASTORIA, the CHOKAI fired deliberate salvos at her, spotting on in deflection first, then using up-ladder until she found the range.

She could afford to be deliberate in her spotting and her fire control. Her fifth salvo hit the ASTORIA at 0155 and started fires. She commenced hitting the ASTORIA with increasing rapidity and no longer needed searchlights.

The AOBA commenced scoring hits at 0152 $\frac{1}{2}$  on the QUINCY with her third salvo; then later knocked out her port anti-aircraft battery. Her sixth salvo hit the QUINCY's well-deck at 0155, starting fires which were so brilliant that the AOBA no longer required

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her searchlights.

The KAKO commenced hitting the VINCENNES at 0152 $\frac{1}{2}$  but her aim was high, many shells passing through the upper works. However, enough hits were made to make the VINCENNES a self illuminated target.

Meanwhile the KINUGASA fired on the CANBERRA utilizing the light from that burning ship as illumination. She then turned her fire to the HELM but missed. Finally at about 0153 $\frac{1}{2}$  she fired four port torpedoes at the CANBERRA, all of which missed. At 0154 she concentrated her fire on the VINCENNES but was hit by the VINCENNES fire. She endeavored to remain in column steering with her main engines. She was hit at 0156 $\frac{1}{2}$  near the waterline by the PATTERSON.

At 0158, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI changed course to 028°(T); thence at 0159 to 0150°(T); finally at 0159 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 059°(T) and commenced falling behind CRUDIV SIX which did not follow the CHOKAI but continued on a northerly course.

TITLE: ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE  
WESTERN GROUP AND VIN-  
CENNES GROUP

At 0150, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN which was in column on course 110°(T) changed course, possibly to avoid

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interference with the FURUTAKA and possibly to place CRUDIV EIGHTEEN in position to join up with the Eastern Group if necessary. The YUBARI now bore 2900(T) distant 1300 yards from TENRYU. The FURUTAKA fell in astern of the TENRYU. The course 0320(T) roughly paralleled the Japanese Eastern Group. At about 0151 the TENRYU was hit on the after deck by shell fragments from the CHICAGO. At 0152, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN in the TENRYU sighted the BAGLEY and opened fire. The YUBARI turning with the TENRYU was masked by the FURUTAKA from the BAGLEY. At 0153 $\frac{1}{2}$ , CRUDIV EIGHTEEN turned north. He had discerned that the Eastern Group was not going to Tulagi but was instead engaging the VINCENNES Group and he realized that he was in a poor position as he was interposed between the heavy forces. At 0155, seeing the effective gunfire of the Japanese Eastern Group, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN believed he could close the range to support his own heavy cruisers. He therefore headed in to get into favorable torpedo firing position. The FURUTAKA followed in column, shifting her fire from the QUINCY to the VINCENNES

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and employing searchlights to do so. The YUBARI continued on her torpedo firing position.

At 0158, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN decided to attack the VINCENNES Group with torpedoes. He maneuvered to do so and at 0159 opened fire on the QUINCY. Meanwhile, the FURUTAKA shifted fire from the QUINCY to the VINCENNES.

TITLE: ACTION BY YUNAGI WITH JARVIS

The YUNAGI, operating singly to engage the JARVIS, opened fire at 0155. She then observed the gaping hole in the JARVIS' bow made by an aircraft torpedo at noon, August 8th. The Commanding Officer, YUNAGI broke off action within five minutes. He evidently made no real effort to sink the JARVIS. Why is not clear. He may have found the JARVIS return fire too heavy; he may have assigned himself a reconnaissance sweep around Savo Island. The general impression created by his conduct of the action is that he did not have an offensive state of mind.

TITLE: ALLIED OPERATIONS - 0150 to 0200 August 9th  
ENGAGEMENT OF VINCENNES GROUP WITH JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP

At 0150 Commander VINCENNES Group commenced accelerating from ten to fifteen knots. He saw the ASTORIA, QUINCY and VINCENNES illuminated by searchlights.

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What thoughts passed through his mind?

He had estimated previously that the enemy were trying to divert his force away so that the enemy Main Attack Force might use the north entrance. He was now caught by surprise by forces from the southeast. At first he believed the searchlights were friendly, looking for enemy forces. He asked them by TBS to stop illuminating him; they did not do so. He felt that this was a hostile act, so ordered his cruisers (on TBS radio) to open fire on the searchlights. Meanwhile he continued on course and speed. But were these decisions correct? His first thought should have been to protect the Allied shipping at Tulagi. This required that he interpose the VIN-<sup>between the enemy and Tulagi</sup> CENES Group. By holding course and speed he would not be able to do this. Instead he should have turned to the right or to the left. If he turned to the right - to about 105°(T) - and increased speed he would reduce his vulnerability as a target and could interpose readily. If he turned to the left, and these illuminating ships were enemy, he would be closing them while unprepared for battle as he

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was shifting from Condition II to I. The ~~American~~ doctrine for surprise and low visibility was "cruisers meeting enemy ships should normally in chance night encounters avoid night action unless conditions were favorable."

The British doctrine was: "to endeavor to gain time by a turn away."

His correct course of action should therefore have been a turn to the right.

TITLE: ACTION BY VINCENNES

The VINCENNES was hit by the KAKO long before she could fire her first salvo, possibly because in shifting from Condition II to I she disrupted her fire control organization. She received shells in her carpenter shop, hangar, bridge, Battle II and antenna trucks. She lost gun-control electrical power. Why the Group Commander did not report to CTG 62.6 that he was under fire by unidentified ships is not explained.

However, observing many ships firing around him, he decided that the firing ships were enemy. He ordered the two destroyers to attack.

The VINCENNES endeavored to return the fire and employed star shells which seem to have burst

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properly. At 0153 she fired her first 8-inch salvo at the KAKO and at 0154 at the KINUGASA.

Now making a running estimate, Commander VINCENNES Group saw that a reverse action was being fought, and that the enemy would pass under his stern toward Tulagi. His forward turrets would soon be unable to bear. He was forced to make a turn. He decided to turn left by simultaneous ship turns to close enemy and to increase speed to twenty knots. Again he failed to use the best opportunity to protect his transports. The left turn would have permitted use of his port batteries and would have closed the range but his fire would have become blanketed by his own ships and his "Tee" crossed. Once again does it not appear that the correct move was a turn to the right?

But Commander VINCENNES Group waited too long. He could not transmit his decision as radio, searchlights and even the blinker signal tubes were out. His midships was afire; his fire mains had been ruptured. He now made his belated decision to turn to the right. However at this moment his flagship

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was hit by a torpedo from the CHOKAI but which he thought was fired by a submarine. The ship shook and shuddered. Three firerooms were flooded; she began to slow down. Endeavoring to steer by engine, the port engine was ordered stopped. There was no reply from the engine room.

She continued to be hit heavily. During these ten minutes the VINCENTES succeeded in firing two nine gun salvos and one three gun salvo.

TITLE: ACTION BY QUINCY

The Commanding Officer of the QUINCY had been on his bridge two minutes when the Japanese searchlights came on. The crew were manning general quarters. Since he did not live, his running estimate will never be known.

The silhouettes of the approaching Japanese cruisers had not been reported.

The Commanding Officer ordered the recognition lights turned on and asked the Officer-of-the-Deck which way he should turn and received reply "To the right."

This indicates that he believed a submarine had been discovered on the surface and he was being illuminated by friendly ships in pursuit. False

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reports of enemy submarines in the area had already been made by other ships. Why he did not consider that the illuminating ships were enemy is not known for he knew of the contact made earlier in the day. Two orders were then received from Commander VIN-  
CENTES Group: "Steam at standard speed" and "Fire on searchlights."

The QUINCY succeeded in obtaining a stereoscopic rangefinder range of 8400 yards on an enemy searchlight. This was the exact range on the AOBA's searchlight but there was delay in opening fire. The QUINCY was in Condition TWO for torpedo defense. Condition I was ordered. Personnel manning the broadside guns had to be relieved before they could go to their regular battle stations for Condition I. Also the talkers had to be relieved during which shift certain vital messages were lost. As a consequence the PATTERSON's warning: "Three enemy ships inside Savo Island." and the contact made on three enemy silhouettes, was not reported to the gunnery control stations.

Unfortunately, Condition ZED -- maximum watertight

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integrity -- was set too rapidly. Many hatches and watertight doors were battened down before the personnel could reach their general quarters stations. Thus many officers and men never succeeded in reaching their battle stations at all.

Most of this trouble appears to have been due to the fact that the QUINCY had just come from the submarine infested Atlantic. She had been on long service there. Her torpedo defense batteries were the prime weapon against the German submarine, and her organization seems to have been built around this fact.

Up to the last moment she felt the searchlights were friendly. Then the AOEA's first salvo landed off her port bow -- the second off her starboard. She was hit by the third on her main deck, by the fourth on her bridge.

The fifth hit anti-aircraft guns five and six, exploding the ammunition in the ready boxes.

The Commanding Officer QUINCY noted the VINCENTES ahead making a radical turn to port.

Not knowing what Commander VINCENTES Group had in

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mind, and having no instructions, the Commanding Officer, QUINCY turned to the left also by a ship's turn to parallel the VINCENNES' new course.

The AOBA's sixth salvo hit the well-deck, setting afire the airplane. The QUINCY was illuminated.

The AOBA turned off her searchlights.

The Commanding Officer, QUINCY was heard on the bridge giving excited commands.

Small wonder as it was eight minutes after General Quarters and not a shot had been fired.

Smoke, fumes, glare of fire amidships interfered with fire control. Smoke from the guns and fires on the VINCENNES ahead also prevented sight of the enemy.

At 0156 a searchlight was made out. This was the FURUTAKA which had illuminated the QUINCY and had commenced firing on her. The Commanding Officer QUINCY considered the FURUTAKA was his primary target and at 0159 fired his first salvo at her - a full salvo of nine 8-inch guns. At this same time he sighted another cruiser - a three stacker - ahead of the FURUTAKA. This was the TENRYU. The

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tactical situation was now becoming serious. He was being fired on by the Eastern Group which was crossing under his stern. He was also being fired on by the Western Group which was moving into torpedo position. He observed the VINCENNES changing to right at this critical time. He changed also.

At this time Turret III was hit by an 8-inch shell from the FURUTAKA, jamming the turret in train. Caught by this cross fire, the QUINCY was hit repeatedly throughout her length. In this predicament she was unable to reply.

ACTION BY THE ASTORIA

At 0150 the ASTORIA in Condition of Readiness II was in column behind the QUINCY. She was not aware of the events which had sent the VINCENNES and QUINCY to General Quarters two minutes earlier. The Commanding Officer was asleep in his emergency cabin off the bridge. Sighting aircraft flares to the southward, the Gunnery Officer trained out the main battery and the 5-inch battery to the port quarter. He loaded the 5-inch guns for the first target that might appear.

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He reported the flares to the bridge and requested that the Supervisory Watch Officer sound General Quarters. The Supervisory Watch Officer told the Officer-of-the-Deck to call the Commanding Officer and report flares, while he went to the port side of the bridge to investigate.

The Officer-of-the-Deck, unfortunately was acknowledging over TBS voice radio the VINCENTNES' message concerning the next change of course and did not immediately call the Commanding Officer.

At 0151, unnoticed by the bridge, a salvo landed off the ASTORIA's port side.

The Gunnery Officer again requested "General Quarters". This request did not get through to the bridge.

The VINCENTNES' star shells now lighted a cruiser with three turrets to the southwest. Two other cruisers were revealed by their searchlights. The spotter estimated their speed at twenty-five knots, range 5500 yards which was very accurate, indeed.

The Gunnery Officer observed two more salvos and again urgently requested the Supervisory Watch Officer to sound the "General Alarm" and asked permission

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to open fire. He now had a target.

The talker did not relay to the responsible officers on the bridge that enemy cruisers had been sighted. At this time the Officer-of-the-Deck told the Commanding Officer through his door that aircraft flares had been sighted.

He did not make sure this message was received but busied himself with station keeping.

The Gunnery Officer made a quick check on the forward main-battery fire control radar screen. He saw four pips. He took 7000 yards as his initial range and saw another salvo land on the port side of the ASTORIA. He gave orders to Spot I to open fire which was done at 0152½ on the CHOKAI. This was in accordance with the Battle Plan of his commanding officer. During a surprise attack the Gunnery Officer was authorized to open fire and then notify the Commanding Officer. Hearing this first salvo, the Supervisory Watch Officer finally alerted to the situation, called from the port wing of the bridge: "Stand by General Alarm."

He did not sound General Quarters....and was acting

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with undue delay. Perhaps he considered the target unimportant. Perhaps, free expression of initiative had been discouraged on the ASTORIA.

The Quartermaster of the Watch, observing the flares and also that a friendly ship to port had fired a salvo, sounded the General Alarm. The Junior Officer-of-the-Deck called the Commanding Officer.

But the Commanding Officer who had been alerted by the ship's salvo, entered the bridge from the disengaged side at the time the ASTORIA was firing her second 8-inch salvo and her first port anti-aircraft battery salvo. The Commanding Officer took control and queried "Who sounded the General Alarm? Who gave the order to commence firing? I think we are firing on our own ships. Let's not get excited and act too hasty. Cease firing."

This showed a lack of confidence in his fire control officers. He acted first without obtaining a true understanding of the situation and showed no confidence in his own battle plan....he also failed to consider enemy capabilities.

The Supervisory Watch Officer still unaware of the

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Japanese cruisers stated that he did not order the General Alarm sounded, nor did he give the order to commence firing, further that he concurred that they were firing on their own ships.

The Gunnery Officer now appealed "For God's sake, give the word to commence firing." He also stated that enemy cruisers had been sighted.

The third and fourth salvo then straddled the ASTORIA. One 8-inch shell pierced her bow. The Commanding Officer exclaimed, "Whether our ships or not, we'll have to stop them. Sound General Quarters. Commence firing!"

Four 8-inch shells then hit the ASTORIA amidships temporarily disabling Turret III.

But Turrets I and II fired a six gun salvo - the third ASTORIA salvo - then reached the limit of their train on the port side. The Gunnery Officer requested more turn of the ship to the left.

The Commanding Officer rang up full speed of twenty knots. He guessed correctly that Commander VINCENT'S Group planned to swing to a southerly course when he saw the ships ahead swing to the left. He did

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not guess it was to be done by simultaneous turn and expected it to be done by a left column movement which was impractical, and not the normal manner of changing course for a division in line of bearing.

At 0156 three 8-inch armor piercing shells pierced the barbette of Turret I. Fires raged.

The ASTORIA was now hit with increasing rapidity. The Commanding Officer endeavored to zigzag with ten and fifteen degree rudder. At 0156 the ASTORIA fired her fourth salvo of two guns from Turret II. At 0157 she fired her fifth salvo of six guns from Turrets II and III. At 0158 her sixth salvo of five guns from the same turrets. At 0159 her seventh salvo of three guns from Turret III. The Commanding Officer noted the QUINCY's fire at the FURUTAKA and noted that he was on the same bearing as the QUINCY and VINCENTES and that the ASTORIA, due to her increased speed, was drawing ahead of the QUINCY, and would cross through this line of fire. But at this time his navigator and chief quartermaster who were assisting in navigation were killed.

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He decided to clear the QUINCY's line of fire by a radical change to the right for a few minutes and then swing back to the left to resume his position in the formation.

ACTION BY HELM

The HELM was ordered by TBS with the WILSON "to attack." She did not receive any information as to course, speed or location of target. She observed QUINCY being hit by enemy shells and watched ASTORIA and VINCENNES open fire. The Commanding Officer decided that the enemy were to the southeast and headed in that direction. He did not order the WILSON to go with him but left her to operate independently.

ACTION BY WILSON

Opened fire on KAKO. Failed to receive the order "to attack." She was fired on ineffectively by the CHOKAI. WILSON fired for about five minutes.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE CHICAGO  
GROUP - 0150 to 0200  
August 9th

The CHICAGO Group was completely disorganized at 0150, when each of the four ships started operating independently.

ACTION BY CHICAGO

Commanding Officer CHICAGO did not realize that he had two important tasks: one, to alert the Commander of the VINCENNES Group and other commanders of TF 62

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that a strong Japanese force was in Iron Bottom Sound, the other, to proceed eastward in spite of his damaged bow to support Commander VINCENNES Group.

Instead he continued westward and opened fire on the YUBARI at 7200 yards. This action is questionable for the rate of change of bearing was high; period of gunfire short. This westward course removed him from the eastward moving enemy. Also he was becoming an apt target for torpedoes because of his continuance on the base course. The CHICAGO now lost the YUBARI and, being without a target, turned on her searchlights for a port sweep. Her star shells had earlier failed to function. She was determined to guard against additional attack from dark sectors. At 0151 the Commanding Officer observed gunfire to starboard which drew to the northward; he ignored this action. Then he sighted the PATTERSON and BAGLEY. He continued to the westward, neither participating in any action nor sighting any enemy ships.

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**TITLE: ACTION BY CANBERRA**

At 0150 the CANBERRA was drifting; she was ablaze and listing five degrees to starboard. Her Captain was mortally wounded on the bridge. The Executive Officer was commanding.

She made every effort to extinguish fires, to repair damage and continue action. She pushed overboard gasoline tanks and ready ammunition. She flooded all magazines and shell rooms.

**ACTION BY PATTERSON**

The PATTERSON proceeded independently eastward, knowing additional night action was probable. But she was neither released by her Group Commander nor directed to join a striking force.

The Commanding Officer discovered that his order at 0148 had not been heard by the Torpedo Officer because of gunfire. The torpedoes had not been fired. In battle it is urgent that all battle commands are delivered and understood. If necessary they should be repeated back to the source for verification.

The PATTERSON opened fire on the KINUGASA and continued to fire when the enemy was silhouetted. She employed no star shells nor searchlights.

She changed course northeasterly to parallel the

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Japanese Eastern Group. It is unfortunate that she did not broadcast her solution of the enemy course and speed.

**ACTION BY BAGLEY**

The BAGLEY failed to rejoin the CHICAGO, but instead changed course to the left to scan the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo Island.

She noted the burning CAMBERPA and passed under her stern. She observed the disabled condition of the CAMBERPA but did not screen her, presumably because of the doctrine: "no effective combatant ships.... are to attempt to assist disabled ships, until the engagement is over."

The Commanding Officer decided his proper course of action was to obtain information of the enemy. This was sound but his method of scanning a passage through which the enemy had already passed, instead of endeavoring to maintain contact with the enemy, was not sound.

**ACTION BY RALPH TALBOT**

At about 0150, observing star shells and firing, the Commanding Officer RALPH TALBOT broadcast over TBS "nothing in sight north of Savo Island." Thus he endeavored to provide his commander with certain

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OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6

negative information which might have been of value had it got through. It is wise for commanders on occasions to provide such negative information.

At 0150 CTG 62.6, in the AUSTRALIA, was operating within the anti-submarine screen of Area X-RAY.

He observed the firing between CPUDIV EIGHTEEN and the PATTERSON. At 0151 he observed strong action eastward of the PATTERSON which suggested surface ship action; and was impressed by the intensity of the developing action. He thought that the VINCENNES Group was coordinating its efforts for common defense of the transports.

Why did he believe this? He had done little to help this coordination. He had not issued any battle plan providing for it. He had withdrawn from the screen without notifying Commander VINCENNES Group of his absence. That officer did not know he was Officer-in-Tactical Command of the Western Screening Area, nor did he know the AUSTRALIA was absent. Clearly, coordination if obtained, was a matter of luck.

CTG 62.6 was disillusioned by this firing. An enemy

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had broken through his night screen, in spite of radar, without being detected for he had received no contact reports.

At 0156 the action shifted to the right, increased in intensity. Lacking information, he presumed the enemy had been turned eastward by the CHICAGO Group into action with the VINCENNES Group. He did not see cause for alarm. His screen would deal with any force -- which from his intelligence -- was likely to attack.

The action was progressing too rapidly for him to rejoin the CHICAGO Group. He decided to place the AUSTRALIA between the enemy and Area X-RAY. He ordered the destroyers of the screening group to rendezvous immediately on the AUSTRALIA to drive off possible enemy ships.

He did not allow himself to forget his objective. This indicates that had he been Officer-in-Tactical Command during the battle, he might have directed the VINCENNES Group to cover the ships off Tulagi. If this had happened, the Japanese Commander might have retired without further offensive action.

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TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE JAPANESE  
CRUISER FORCE 0200 to 0220  
August 9th  
ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE  
EASTERN GROUP AND VIN-  
CENNES GROUP

At 0200 the CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX were separating. COMCRUDIV SIX noting CHOKAI's change of course, had to decide whether to follow her or continue the engagement. He changed course to 000°(T) and continued the engagement, interposing CRUDIV SIX between the CHOKAI and the VINCENNES Group. Perhaps in so doing he thought that the CHOKAI had suffered a minor injury. Possibly he was carrying out Japanese doctrine covering disabled ships in action.

The KAKO and KINUGASA followed the AOBA in her course to the north.

The KINUGASA fired her right torpedoes toward the Transport Area X-RAY, 26,000 yards away but well within torpedo range. The transports had stood out from their anchorage at 0150 and therefore were no longer targets for torpedoes directed at X-RAY.

The Commanding Officer of the KINUGASA in firing these torpedoes showed his concern that the assigned objective was not being accomplished.

At 0201, the KAKO fired four port torpedoes at the ASTORIA -- all missed. After crossing the "Tee" the Japanese Eastern Group gave the nearest Allied

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cruiser, the ASTORIA, a terrific concentration of fire for five minutes. The KAKO and KINUGASA had concentrated on her throughout; the AOBA briefly added her fire before shifting back to the QUINCY; the CHOKAI from an offset position in the rear added hers. But at 0205 two shells from the QUINCY landed in the CHOKAI's operation room, burning all charts of Commander Cruiser Force and one shell landed near the aviation crane. At this same time the KAKO fired two torpedoes which missed. At 0207, the AOBA noted that her target, the QUINCY, changed course to the northeast and "although afire rushed to attack our battle formation from twenty degrees to port. Her Commanding Officer was a very brave man."

The AOBA turned to the left because COMCRUDIV SIX wished to close the torpedo range on the QUINCY, also on the ASTORIA and VINCENNES which had turned away to the left.

The CHOKAI, mindful of the KINUGASA which was still having steering difficulties, turned on her searchlight, swept its beam past the WILSON, located the

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VINCENNES, commenced firing. The VINCENNES, helpless, tried to cover herself with smoke.

The KAKO fired her main battery at the QUINCY. The KINUGASA fired her main battery at the QUINCY. The AOBA reopened fire on the QUINCY at 3000 yards and at 0216 struck her with a torpedo.

The Japanese claimed the QUINCY caught fire and sank immediately. Actually she went down twenty minutes later. The Japanese at 0216 extinguished all searchlights and ceased firing.

Commander Cruiser Force was confronted with an important decision. The VINCENNES Group was all but <sup>effectively eliminated</sup> destroyed; he had removed the Allied Screening Group with slight damage to himself.

He was now 20,000 yards from the Tulagi Anchorage. He discussed the situation with his staff. He was steaming abreast of the KINUGASA. COMCRUDIV SIX was wondering what action his commander would take and was awaiting orders. He decided to retire. At 0220 he directed: "All ships withdraw."

This decision rejected the basic objective: destruction of Allied shipping at Tulagi-Guadalcanal.

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Later the Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet severely criticized for his failure Commander Cruiser Force to destroy the Allied transports and cargo ships, even at the cost of all his cruisers.

It is to be concluded that Commander Cruiser Force was motivated by the danger of Allied air attacks. Although he had not located any Allied carriers, he knew that they were in the area and might rapidly be closing his command. He feared a dawn attack by them and therefore determined to depart the area before he had accomplished his original objective.

**TITLE: ACTION BETWEEN THE JAPANESE WESTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP**

At 0200 the three ships of the Japanese Western Group were engaging the VINCENNES Group from southwestward range 3800 yards.

COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN felt that the enemy cruisers were damaged so that close operations by his light cruisers were safe. The enemy had fired in a desultory fashion and appeared to be operating without coordinated direction. The TENRYU swung to the left and at 0202 fired six torpedoes at the QUINCY. The YUBARI fired four torpedoes at the VINCENNES. The TENRYU swung back and fired her guns into the port

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side of the QUINCY.

The YUBARI and FURUTAKA concentrated gunfire on the VINCENNES. The TENRYU shifted fire to the destroyer WILSON but made no hits. She then shifted her attention back to the QUINCY and confirmed her sinking.

About 0208 the YUBARI and FURUTAKA ceased firing on the VINCENNES and commenced a definite retirement. At 0214 TENRYU illuminated the RALPH TALBOT with searchlight and fired at her as did the FURUTAKA. A total of seven salvos was fired at the RALPH TALBOT of which one hit. At 0220 Commander Cruiser Force directed by radio all ships to break off action and withdraw.

OPERATIONS OF YUNAGI

The YUNAGI which had been looking for Allied destroyers -- the BLUE and the two-masted schooner -- now retired from west of Savo Island.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED  
SCREENING GROUP 0200 to  
0220 August 9th  
ACTION BY VINCENNES

At 0200 the VINCENNES completed her right turn and steadied on her course of 340°. She had lost track of the KAKO and KINUGASA because they were crossing the "Tee" at the time and concentrating on the

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*had come*

ASTORIA. She ~~remained~~ under the fire of the FURUTAKA and YUBARI. *had not been* Until then she ~~was~~ aware of the Western Group.

She was heavily damaged by the FURUTAKA's fire. At 0202 she fired two 8-inch six gun salvos to starboard - her fourth and fifth main battery salvos. At 0205 $\frac{1}{2}$  she was hit by a torpedo from the YUBARI. This torpedo hit a fireroom causing a loss of all steam pressure. A shell fell in her forward engine room. The engineering officers then secured all fire rooms and the forward engine room but failed to notify the commanding officer of this fact. The after engine room was untouched, but when the steam pressure fell, the officer in charge also secured without permission, or without notifying the Commanding Officer that the VINCENTNES was without motive power. At 0205 the Commanding Officer learned that he had no guns to fire. He wished to conceal his ship with smoke but a messenger reported the engine rooms abandoned and dark. However, he managed to swing his ship to the left.

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Still feeling that he was being fired upon by friendly ships, he managed to get a large U.S. National Ensign hoisted to his foremast. At 0213 he was fired on for two minutes by the retiring CHOKAI. At 0216 he started to abandon ship.

ACTION BY QUINCY

The QUINCY fired three salvos of star shells to starboard to locate the ships of the Japanese Eastern Group. The stars were set short and failed to silhouette the enemy. The QUINCY was now illuminated by the AOBA and was heavily hit, one fireroom being put out of action.

At this moment she was also fired on by the TENRYU of the Western Group. At 0202 the Commanding Officer QUINCY was aware he was caught in a crossfire.

He decided his best course was a mean track between which were passing him on either side at a relative speed of the two Japanese groups. To his Fire Control Officer he ordered: "We are going through the middle. Give them hell!"

At 0204 <sup>she</sup> the QUINCY was hit by two torpedoes from the TENRYU. She continued to return fire.

At 0203 the QUINCY fired her second 8-inch salvo from Turrets I and II at the AOBA. At 0204 she was

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hit on the port side by two of the TENRYU's torpedoes which destroyed firerooms three and four. She then, at 0205, fired her third and last 8-inch salvo. This salvo appears to have hit the CHOKAI. But at 0206 a salvo from the AOBA struck her bridge and cleared out the pilot house. The Commanding Officer was mortally wounded. The Junior-Officer-of-the-Deck was directed by the Commanding Officer, before he collapsed beside the steering controls, to transfer control to Batt II.

Batt II had been destroyed some minutes before. Turrets I and II were now hit and her armament became unusable.

At 0208 she did not notice that she had nearly collided with the ASTORIA which was turning to the left.

At 0210 an increasing list forced abandonment of after engine room. The forward engine room continued to operate as the ship settled. Turret II exploded from a delayed internal shell hit. At 0214 the Gunnery Officer sent his assistant to the bridge for orders. Everyone in the pilot house was dead

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with The Commanding Officer  
except a signalman at the steering wheel and the  
~~mechanically wounded~~  
~~Commanding Officer~~ lying beside him. The steersman  
was spinning the wheel to port with no steering  
~~the steersman said~~  
control. He said that the Commanding Officer had  
instructed him to beach the ship on Savo Island four  
miles distant on the port quarter. The ship was in  
at this moment  
gradual turn to starboard. The Commanding Officer  
~~straightened up and~~  
then fell back ~~dead~~ apparently dead.

The order to beach a ship is sound if the Commanding  
Officer is sure it will not fall into enemy hands.  
On the other hand a Commanding Officer should make  
every effort to save his ship by the prosecution  
of damage control methods with the utmost energy  
and tenacity. The Assistant Gunnery Officer,  
having seen the Captain's death and heard his last  
orders, reported these to the Gunnery Officer.  
The QUINCY now had no Commanding Officer and no  
over-all direction. The Gunnery Officer, who was  
exercising command as such, fifth in rank, felt  
that some of his seniors were still alive. Whether  
he made an effort to discover who was Commanding  
Officer is not clear. It should be pointed out

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that when command devolves upon a subordinate, every effort must be made to inform that subordinate of his succession to command. This was done in the CANBERRA at 0148.

The Gunnery Officer now gave orders to the Gunnery personnel to abandon ship but apparently informed no one else.

At 0216 the QUINCY was struck by a torpedo on her starboard side. She gradually slowed down.

She was helpless in the water, listing to port and sinking by the bow. She had suffered the greatest material and personnel damage of any Allied ship.

Her survivors were concentrating on the tedious business of abandoning ship.

#### ACTION BY ASTORIA

At 0200 the Commanding Officer was changing course to the right to clear the QUINCY's line of fire.

He planned then to resume his position in the formation. He had no knowledge of the Western ~~Group~~ Group. The ASTORIA was drawing fire from three ~~Arto Kaho and Kuyasa~~ enemy ships as they crossed the "Tee" ~~astern~~ astern.

At 0200, she fired her eighth salvo - a three gun salvo from Turret III - at the CHOKAI, and at 0201

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her ninth salvo - a six gun salvo from Turrets II and III - at the AOBA. Knowing that he was fouling the range of the QUINCY, the Commanding Officer ASTORIA turned to the right; but the QUINCY turned to the right also.

*the Astoria was hit on the bridge by*  
At 0202, a shell from the KAKO ~~hit her bridge~~. Her steersman was killed, her signal officer and boatswain's mate of the watch who was manning the engine room telegraph, ~~was~~ *were* wounded. The ship swung farther right than its Commanding Officer intended. But the wheel was manned and the course steadied.

The ASTORIA could not make flank speed of twenty-five knots, due to standby boiler unreadiness.

Under concentrated fire of three ships between 0200 and 0202 she was hit repeatedly. *The concentration of* ~~Then the AOBA~~  
*fire against her slackened when at 0202 the Astoria shifted to*  
*the Quincy but was increased again when at 0204 she was*  
*fired at by the Chokai*  
~~shifted to the QUINCY but the CHOKAI brought the ASTORIA under three ship fire again.~~

At 0203 the ASTORIA fired her tenth salvo at the AOBA. This salvo was of five guns from Turrets II and III.

The Commanding Officer now learned that the ASTORIA was in serious condition; her topside a shambles.

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her speed reduced, her guns except for Turrets II and III were out of action. There was little he could do, except swing back to the left.

At about 0207 the ASTORIA fired her eleventh salvo from three guns of Turret III at the KINUGASA. At this moment the enemy's fire slackened. This was a great relief to the ASTORIA's crew. The enemy did not come in for the kill but withdrew. Why remains unclear for it is presumed that the Japanese doctrine <sup>was</sup> similar to <sup>that of the US Navy</sup> American: "Victory in action, once gained, must be followed up to the complete annihilation of the enemy."

The ASTORIA had received no torpedo damage; enemy gunfire had not penetrated below the second deck. At 0208 the Commanding Officer avoided collision with the QUINCY by full left rudder.

By 0213 <sup>she had</sup> ~~the~~ ASTORIA received more hits; she lost steering control from the bridge. She had no motive power; her entire topside aft of the foremast was on fire; <sup>her</sup> ~~the~~ fire control equipment was inoperative. At 0216 the Commanding Officer ordered all personnel including the wounded to the

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forecastle.

The Executive Officer, meanwhile, had ordered all personnel, who could do so, to the fantail.

Neither group knew of the other's existence -- because of the midship fires.

But the battle was over.

#### ACTION BY HELM

At about 0200 the HELM sighted a ship which she figured was enemy. She prepared to launch torpedoes and then discovered the enemy was the friendly BAGLEY. The Commanding Officer decided to return to the VINCENNES Group and in so doing nearly collided with the WILSON. At 0210 on orders from his division commander, he headed to the concentration point for destroyers northwest of Savo Island.

#### ACTION BY WILSON

The WILSON continued to fire at the Japanese Eastern Group. At about 0208 she was forced to ~~cease firing~~ <sup>and ceased firing</sup> ~~and~~ maneuver to avoid collision with the HELM. At 0210 she reopened fire on the Eastern Group and continued firing at CHOKAI until 0216 when CHOKAI extinguished her searchlight. The WILSON then headed for Savo Island.

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OPERATIONS OF BLUE

At 0215 the BLUE made a sound contact at 2000 yards on the two-masted schooner which while plainly visible had not been sighted by the BLUE look-outs. This shows a lack of alertness and may account in part for the failure to detect the Japanese Cruiser Force as it made its original approach into Iron Bottom Sound.

ACTION BY RALPH TALBOT

At 0214 the RALPH TALBOT was fired on by the TENRYU and FURUTAKA which she thought were friendly. The Commanding Officer commenced flashing his fighting lights, told the firing ships over TBS that he was friendly and notified our forces that he was being fired on by friendly ships.

The RALPH TALBOT, from 0214 to 0217, received one hit. At 0218½ she was fired on by the YUBARI and again by the FURUTAKA. She returned the fire and also fired three starboard torpedoes at the YUBARI all of which missed.

During this firing she received five additional hits which did serious damage.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6  
(AUSTRALIA)

At 0200, CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA was still waiting for information of the action. He naturally expected

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to hear from his group commanders and from his destroyer pickets.

To his great disappointment he heard nothing. Meanwhile he sent out his order directing his destroyers to concentrate on the AUSTRALIA. However, the position given could not be deciphered by all addressee destroyers. Consequently these destroyers headed for the wrong rendezvous. This was not known at the time by CTG 62.6.

At 0220 he could plainly see the naval action was over. For reasons best known to himself he refrained from querying his group commanders concerning their activities.

TITLE: WITHDRAWAL OF JAPANESE  
CRUISER FORCE 0220 to  
2400

At 0240 the Eastern and Western Groups were in contact as they withdrew independently. At 0340 Commander Japanese Cruiser Force had his force assembled in the same position where he had taken up the battle formation at midnight. None of his ships had suffered serious damage. Once again they were all under his tactical command.

He withdrew at thirty knots with the ships in column, CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA, TENRYU,

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YUBARI, YUNAGI. At 0700, he was 135 miles northwest of Savo Island.

At 0830 -- 175 miles from Savo, he was 275 miles beyond his estimate of the position of the enemy's carriers.

At 0930, abreast of northern end of Tella Lavella Island, he felt safe at last, and divided his command at 0958 into two groups, one the Bismarck Area Group, the other the Rabaul Group.

OPERATIONS OF FIFTH AIR ATTACK  
FORCE

Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force conducted routine searches which were successful in discovering the JARVIS and in obtaining reasonably good information concerning the Allied forces at Guadalcanal. His planes failed to discover the Allied carriers, because they were already retiring.

He launched an attack group of sixteen land attack planes armed with torpedoes and escorted by fifteen fighters to attack the shipping at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. He diverted this attack group to attack the JARVIS, which had been erroneously reported as an Achilles Class cruiser. At 1300 this attack group sank the JARVIS.

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TITLE: OPERATIONS OF CHICAGO,  
CANBERRA, QUINCY, ASTORIA,  
VINCENNES  
CHICAGO

At 0226 Commanding Officer CHICAGO received from  
CTG 62.6 "Are your ships in action?"

He answered: "Were, but not now," amplifying later  
with more information. Returning to his area he  
exchanged shots with the PATTERSON through improper  
recognition but doing no damage. Learning of the  
condition of the CANBERRA, he ordered her wounded  
taken off by the BLUE and the PATTERSON. He then  
stood towards the concentration area where at about  
0720 he joined Transport Group X-RAY.

During the entire action the CHICAGO fired twenty-  
five 5-inch shells but no 8-inch shells. She re-  
ceived in return one shell hit, probably 4.7-inch.  
She also received one torpedo hit in the bow which  
detonated and one torpedo hit amidships starboard  
which failed to detonate.

LOSS OF CANBERRA

The CANBERRA could not be made to steam by 0630.  
At 0640, on orders from CTF 62, she was fired on  
by the SELFRIDGE and ELLET. Later one torpedo from  
the ELLET sank her at 0747. During the entire  
action she fired no 8-inch shells and probably no  
more than three 4-inch shells. She received not

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less than twenty-four 8-inch and 4.7-inch hits and no torpedo hits.

LOSS OF QUINCY

The QUINCY sank at 0238. During the entire action she fired twenty-one 8-inch shells. She received in return thirty-six 8-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with possibility of not less than eighteen more - a total of fifty-four hits plus three torpedo hits.

LOSS OF VINCENNES

The VINCENNES sank at 0250. During the entire action she fired about thirty-three 8-inch shells, about twenty 5-inch, receiving fifty-seven actual 8-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with possibility of not less than seventeen more - a total of seventy-four hits. She also received two torpedo hits.

LOSS OF ASTORIA

At 0445 the ASTORIA's survivors, including the Captain, who were clustered on the ASTORIA's bow, were removed by the BAGLEY. Neither the BAGLEY nor the ASTORIA's Captain were aware that many survivors were gathered on the ASTORIA's stern until they saw flashing lights. At 0545, shortly before daylight, the ASTORIA's wounded as well as other personnel not required for salvage work were removed from the ASTORIA's fantail. At the same time the Captain

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and certain key repair personnel returned aboard the ASTORIA. Energetic measures were then taken to salvage the ship.

The HELM, WILSON, HOPKINS, BUCHANAN assisted in salvaging and fighting fires, which could not be overcome.

At 1215, the ASTORIA rolled over, settled by the stern and disappeared. She had fired fifty-three 8-inch shells and fifty-nine 5-inch shells.

She had received thirty-four 8-inch and 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with a possibility of not less than twenty-nine more, a total of sixty-three hits with no torpedo hits.

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF RADAR AND  
ANTI-SUBMARINE SCREEN  
OPERATIONS OF BLUE

At 0250 the BLUE sighted the JARVIS which was withdrawing from the area for repairs. The JARVIS was trailing a heavy oil slick.

The BLUE then went alongside the CANBERRA, removed many of the CANBERRA's personnel and then proceeded to Area X-RAY. During the action the BLUE fired no projectiles or torpedoes and received no hits.

OPERATIONS OF RALPH TALBOT

The RALPH TALBOT fired one torpedo at the YUBARI at about 0223 which torpedo missed. She also fired

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several salvos at the YUBARI with her 5-inch battery and scored one hit. As a result of damage suffered she lost all power for a time but finally maneuvered to make her way to Savo Island, and thence escorted by the SELFRIDGE to Area X-RAY where she rejoined TF 62 at 1420.

During the entire action she fired about twelve (12) 5-inch projectiles, the exact number being indeterminate. She also fired four torpedoes all of which missed. She received in return six 5.5-inch hits.

WHAT WERE THE PRINCIPAL COMMANDERS  
DOING DURING THIS TIME?

TITLE: OPERATIONS OF OTHER ALLIED  
FORCES 0000 August 9th to  
2400 August 9th  
OPERATIONS OF CTF 62

At 0145 CTF 62 observed aircraft flares and heard heavy gunfire. His transports and cargo ships discontinued unloading and many got underway without orders. Visibility was as low as 500 yards at times and there were frequent rain squalls. CTF 62 realized that a battle was underway through interception of messages and he learned that CTF 62.6 was not in the battle area. He deduced that his

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screening forces had been heavily damaged and felt that he should retire. However he realized that he had landed inadequate supplies and decided to remain longer than first planned. By 0800 he had a fair picture of his losses and informed CTF 61. He decided to retire and ordered the X-RAY transports to get underway at 1500 and the YOKE transports at 1700. Both groups headed for Noumea.

**OPERATIONS OF CTF 61**

At about 0500 CTF 61 heard a flash report indicating surface action at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. At 0530 he received authority from COMSOPACFOR to retire TG 61.1. He commenced retiring at 0430. At about 0800 he heard more news, generally bad, about the night battle. He took no action whatsoever, except to continue his retirement. At 0930 he received a report from CTG 61.1 that the SARATOGA planes had observed the JARVIS retiring from the area.

**OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SUBMARINES  
OPERATIONS OF S-38**

The S-38 sank, at 0024, the Japanese transport MEIYO MARU which was one of six troop-carrying ships bearing Japanese reinforcements from Rabaul to Guadalcanal. This caused the other transports to return to Rabaul.

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OPERATIONS OF CTF 63

CTF 63 conducted routine searches which were all negative. The search of Sector II by two B-17's from Espiritu Santo which covered the Slot missed contact with the retiring cruiser force by about forty miles. The attack requested by CTF 62 on the cruisers and seaplane tenders believed to be at Rekata Bay failed to materialize as the air attack group was unable to locate them. They were not there of course for the identification had been erroneous.

OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER ALLIED  
AIR FORCES SOWESPAC

Planes from this command contacted the four cruisers of CRUDIV SIX retiring from the battle. No report of this contact appears to have reached the responsible commanders in SOPACFOR.

TITLE: CONCLUDING EVENTS

EPILOGUE

TF 61, the Air Support Force proceeded to its fueling rendezvous to the south and west of Espiritu Santo.

TF 62, the Amphibious Force, retired southward to Noumea.

TF 63 retired its further search groups from Marasike Estuary and Ndeni to Espiritu Santo which became the forward air position in the South Pacific

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Area.

The Marines ashore on Tulagi and Guadalcanal Islands were left without naval and air support until August 13th.

The CHOKAI and CRUDIV EIGHTEEN arrived at Rabaul August 10th and CRUDIV SIX, less the KAKO, arrived at Silver Sound outside Kavieng August 10th. On the same day, the KAKO was sunk by the Allied submarine S-44 northwest of Simberi Island. The Japanese submarines RO-33, I-121, I-122, were operating in Iron Bottom Sound.

TITLE: EFFECTS OF THE BATTLE

The loss of four cruisers was a serious blow to the Allies. This loss was immediately felt in other areas: in the preparations for the North African Invasion, also in the preparations for the offensive in the Aleutians.

But victories at sea are not always measured by ships lost or tactical effects gained; they are more often measured by their contribution to the strategical plan.

The Japanese commander did not exploit his tactical success and retired without destroying the Allied

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shipping and without annihilating the Allied screening group. The tactical success was not exploited. Allied unloading of transports and cargo vessels continued. As the consequence, the beachheads were more firmly secured and the marines were enabled to continue successfully their military operations ashore.

As a result, the Japanese Navy and Army General Staff decided that the Solomons was a vital area and should be defended, if necessary, by a decisive fleet action. This was a departure from the plan adopted after Midway to fight such a decisive action nearer the Empire. In this the Japanese Army <sup>Department</sup> did <sup>fully</sup> not agree because of the difficulty in sending armament and supplies. Because of the lack of unity between the Army and Navy the Japanese frittered away their military power in the early days of the Allied Occupation.

Thus the seizure of Guadalcanal became a strategic success for the Allied arms. It was the first of the successful amphibious operations which were to culminate in the Battle of Okinawa.

BATTLE LESSONS

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1. COMSOPAC and COMSOPAC wished to defer the operation to seize the New Britain-New Guinea-New Ireland Area. They claimed there was insufficient air coverage available for the different phases of the operation which once initiated should be pushed through as one continuous movement. They also felt that there was a lack of sufficient shipping.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied that despite these considerations it was essential to stop without delay the enemy's southward advance from Tulagi. An enemy airfield at Guadalcanal would seriously hamper Allied air bases at both Santa Cruz and Espiritu Santo.

LESSON: There are occasions when the demands of strategy require severe tactical sacrifices. The Joint Chiefs of Staff decided as a calculated risk to seize Guadalcanal under unfavorable conditions. They considered that the heavy sacrifice which tactics would make would be appropriate to the strategic aim. Such a decision, made by a higher command over the objections of a subordinate, should be made only after thorough study of the subordinate's

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recommendation and consideration of all factors involved.

2. The Japanese counted on and were remarkably successful in gaining surprise. They destroyed the main strength of the Allied Screening Force with slight damage to themselves and obtained decisive superiority in gunpower. The effect on the Allied commanders was almost stupefying. They confused the situation, mistook the enemy for friends; failed to make reports of the enemy's presence; made numerous incorrect decisions; and almost forgot their primary objective, the defense of their transports and cargo ships.

LESSON: Surprise is the injection of the unexpected for the purpose of creating an unfavorable military situation for the enemy. It must, however, not be counted on too strongly in planning. There should be sufficient means available to insure success, if surprise be not obtained.

3. CTF 61, Commander of the Expeditionary Force was stationed in a carrier where he also commanded one of the carrier task groups. It was felt, because he was the only combat trained carrier task force

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commander in the area, that he should be with the carriers. He was never fully cognizant of the landing and unloading operations at Tulagi-Guadalcanal; was rarely ever nearer than eighty miles and he finally retired to the serious detriment of the landing operations.

LESSON: The commander of an expeditionary force should have freedom of action so that he may be present at the point of paramount interest. He should be free to join a landing operation during a landing or to join a surface force should naval or air action be imminent. By so doing, he may keep himself continuously informed of the changing situation and may employ his communications once contact with the enemy has been made. He should employ as flagship, a cruiser or battleship, which can be spared from its assignments, rather than a carrier which can only operate in a limited area. He should have no responsibilities except the operation of the force as a whole and should not become involved in the operations of smaller groups, lest he overlook his more important responsibilities.

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4. The Japanese Commander Cruiser Force designated an objective for his force -- destruction of the Allied transports and cargo ships. Instead of attempting to destroy the shipping he engaged the Allied screening force and then retired from the area.

The Allied Commander designated an objective to his screening force, the defense of the transports and cargo ships. His subordinate commanders made little effort to accomplish this by interposing their commands between the Japanese cruisers and the Allied shipping.

LESSON: A military objective is the end toward which action is being -- or is to be -- directed. It is a situation to be created, or maintained. It is assigned to a subordinate; or a commander may assume it on his own initiative to meet the demands of a situation which has suddenly arisen when the immediate superior has not had time to act. It is essential that a commander make every effort consistent with proper "costs" to accomplish his objective, since his failure to do so may vitally affect his superior's plan.

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5. Claims of damage by the Japanese commanders were considerably exaggerated, particularly concerning their air attack on the Allied shipping at Tulagi-Guadalcanal on August 8th, and their success during the night cruiser action.

LESSON: Accurate knowledge of the enemy's losses has an importance considerably beyond that of reflecting credit on own forces or own commanders. No commander can make correct decisions in battle nor yet learn and apply its lessons to future tactics without knowing how successful he has been in damaging the enemy. Exaggeration of enemy losses may warp the immediate judgement of commanders in battle; it may hinder tactical advancement; it may affect long range strategy.

6. Although Commander Cruiser Force authorized his division commanders to operate separately, he was always able to obtain an appropriate degree of combat superiority at each point of contact! CTG 62.6 on the other hand so divided his forces as to obtain combat inferiority at each point of contact.

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LESSON: While a flat statement that it is unwise to divide a force may contain a sound element of caution, it is not necessarily unwise to do so, for a division or forces may be necessary or desirable. Such axiomatic advice to be adequate should indicate when and in what measure such division may or may not be necessary or desirable.

On the other hand the statement that the requirements of warfare are met by bringing superiority to bear at the decisive time and place is also inadequate. What is necessary here is to determine the appropriate degree of superiority and the proper time and place.

7. The Allied High Command on occasions estimated the course of action that the enemy intended to follow and then based their plans on this intention. They did not give adequate consideration to other enemy capabilities which might adversely affect their plans.

LESSON: A commander in making plans should follow the method of enemy capabilities rather than the method of enemy intentions.

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8. All of the Allied ships were in condition of Readiness TWO except the CANBERRA which was in British Condition of Readiness TWO. With the exception of the QUINCY they were organized to go to Condition ONE in about five minutes. The QUINCY required possibly ten minutes. This was because many of her personnel were not at their battle stations but were at other stations, mainly anti-aircraft directors. They therefore took much longer to reach General Quarters stations. The QUINCY was also closed in Material Readiness Condition ZED so rapidly that many of her personnel were not able to reach their battle stations. Net result: The QUINCY was delayed in firing her first salvo by twelve minutes. Both the QUINCY and VINCENNES appeared unable to open fire while shifting from Condition TWO to Condition ONE.

LESSON: The commanding officer should make every effort to ensure that his ship is so organized and trained that <sup>(a)</sup> only the minimum time is necessary to open fire or to set any condition of readiness, and <sup>(b)</sup> so that effective fire may be opened with the

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existing condition of readiness.

He should study the fundamental requirements of the sea area in which he is operating to be sure that his conditions of readiness are synchronized with the demands of the situation.

9. The Allied ships were equipped with and relied on radar; the Japanese were not so equipped but relied on visual detection. The Allies attached little importance to visual detection. They did not know the limitations of radar in those days or its failure in the presence of land masses.

LESSON: Complete reliance should not be placed on technological devices until fully proven. Provision should be made for paralleling them by other means.

10. The Joint Chiefs of Staff desired that COMSOPAC should be in supreme command of all operations for the seizure of Tulagi-Guadalcanal. They moved the boundary between the SOWESPAC and SOPAC area to the westward from Longitude 165(E) to Longitude 159(E). But they permitted division of command in the shore-based aircraft. This interfered with the prompt

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reporting of contacts and was one of the causes of the Allied failure.

LESSON: A commander charged with the conduct of an operation should be given operational control over all shore-based aircraft needed for the operation. Or he should be able to communicate directly with all bases and aircraft in order to receive immediately all contact reports and other vital information.

11. During this operation both the Allies and the Japanese employed land and tender based aircraft primarily for intelligence and attack purposes. In both cases the air cover provided was far from adequate because of the limited number of search planes, the limited range of search aircraft, the shortage of suitably located airfields and finally because of bad flying weather in certain areas.

LESSON: The employment of land and tender based aircraft for the defense of a sea area when no carrier based aircraft are available and when weather conditions are favorable can only be effective when said aircraft are adequate in number

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and training and suitably disposed to furnish the intelligence required for the security of the area; when the airfields are suitably located to provide mutual support and concentration not only for themselves but for any surface forces in the area; when the attack aircraft are sufficient in numbers and quality and the pilots are adequately trained, and when all aircraft are operated under a single command.

12. COMSOPAC directed CTF 63 to conduct patrol plane searches to protect the surface ships of TF 62 against air attack. Prior to 2242, August 7th, CTF 63 received no requests for protection against enemy surface craft. It was in surface craft that the principal threat lay.

LESSON: In planning an operation the Commander should consider fully every element of weakness and strength and every advantage and disadvantage. This should show him every possibility the enemy might exploit. It should also cause him to envisage those enemy operations which could affect his own plans. CTF 62 at 2242, August 7th by such a study saw the

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need for additional air searches north of Choiseul Island and in the direction of Rabaul against the approach of surface forces from the westward.

13. Of all the ships of the two screening groups the PATTERSON alone attempted to broadcast a contact report to the Officer-in-Tactical Command. She did this by TES voice radio, but did not parallel it by C.W. radio. Instead she attempted to do so by visual means. Only the VINCENNES, QUINCY, WILSON and RALPH TALBOT received her report. The QUINCY and WILSON acted on it immediately; but the VINCENNES operator failed to deliver it to the bridge.
- LESSON: Contact reports of enemy ships or aircraft should be made as soon as possible. Accurate information of the enemy should be provided: his bearing, distance from a geographical point, or his latitude and longitude, his disposition or formation, the number of his units and their course and speed. The senior officer at the point of contact is responsible for the transmission of such reports and should prevent duplication by ships in visual contact with him.

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14. Both Commander CHICAGO Group and Commander VINCENNES Group failed to inform their immediate superior, CTG 62.6 and other interested commanders that the western screening group was in a fierce night action with strong enemy forces. They also failed to send information of the number and nature of the forces, nor of the progress and termination of the action.

LESSON: It is vital during battle that the Officer-in-Tactical Command be informed of the changing situation. Partial information promptly received is better than complete information received too late. Negative information may be as important as positive information. New factors that change a situation should be reported immediately. He in turn should keep his subordinates informed. Very often a commander assumes his superior has information which he does not in fact have. He may consider his information inconsequential when it may be vitally important to another commander. In case of doubt, more rather than less information should be provided. To this end, each ship should

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have an intelligence staff, even if it consists of one man.

15. No night battle plan was prescribed for the Allied screening force.

LESSON: A battle plan sets forth the methods for coordinated employment of forces during battle.

Without some plan or doctrine for guiding commanding officers in their individual actions, it is nearly impossible to obtain coordinated action.

The plan should be brief, clear as to tactics to be employed, especially if new or non-standard. The plan should be issued in advance and discussed with commanders concerned. A plan assures the best employment of the forces available.

16. CTG 62.6 left the AUSTRALIA Group about 2055 August 8th and headed for the anchorage at Guadalcanal. He informed the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO Group, but failed to notify either Commander VINCENNES Group or his other sub commanders of his departure. Neither the Commander VINCENNES Group nor the other commanders knew that the Commanding Officer VINCENNES was temporarily Officer-in-Tactical Command.

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When that officer saw the airplane flares and realized the Japanese were probably attempting a night surface operation, he awaited instructions from OTG 62.6 rather than to initiate action himself for coordination of the sub groups.

LESSON: All changes in tactical command should be promulgated to the command by signal or dispatch which should state the location of the Officer-in-Tactical Command, and the ship in which he is embarked.

17. The Commanding Officer CHICAGO performed additional duty as Commander CHICAGO Group and the Commanding Officer VINCENNES likewise commanded the VINCENNES Group. Neither had time or staff for these dual responsibilities. Both involved in their basic function as ship commanders overlooked their duties as group commanders. This forced other ship commanders to act independently, guided somewhat by doctrine.

LESSON: The Commanding Officer of a ship may also command a small task group in peacetime operations. This is not recommended in combatant task groups that

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may engage an enemy as the commanding officer of a ship in action has demands and responsibilities so pressing as to require all his time. Similarly a task group commander cannot devote his attention to other than his own responsibilities. In general the commanding officer of a ship has inadequate personnel to handle both assignments.

18. The Japanese cruisers fired a total of 1,441 shells and made not less than 159 actual hits, attaining about 15.5 per cent. The Allies fired 471 shells making ten hits or two per cent.

LESSON: Gunnery effectiveness in war stems not only from frequent battle experience but also from intensive day and night training in combat areas as well as in rear areas. It is only thus that units can be kept ready for battle.

19. The failure of the Allied Command at the Battle of Savo Island was most marked. Group commanders and Commanding Officers of Allied ships, probably as proficient as most of their contemporaries in the U.S. Naval service at the time, once they had been caught by surprise, almost entirely thereafter made

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incorrect decisions. Except for the PATTERSON's commander and the RALPH TALBOT's report at 0215 no other commander made reports to the Officer-in-Tactical Command or any one else in authority. Except for the Commanding Officers, QUINCY and ASTORIA and initial actions of the Commanding Officer VINCENNES, each commanding officer acted independently. The Group Commanders who were also ship commanding officers, generally acted only as ship commanding officers. The destroyer commanding officers generally acted individually without reference to one another or to the cruiser groups to which they were attached. The objective, defense of shipping, appeared to have been forgotten; no attempts were made to trail the Japanese cruisers during the action; few reports were made to the high command once the action was over.

LESSON: After Savo Island, and during and after World War II, there arose within the Navy an appreciation of the need for considerable improvement in professional judgement in command...it was realized that more attention should be given to

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employment of the brain during war...that too much attention had been given during peacetime to purely technical and administrative matters and too little to the broad study of command.

Those who make decisions in the face of a fierce and resolute enemy must have the commander's moral capacity to command and mental ability to solve problems during a swift moving action. These call for the utmost resources of mental power. Marshal Foch stated: "One is not born with learning..... We shall only reach it by a continuous effort of penetration, absorption, assimilation, by repeated and detailed labor."

There is no substitute in war for the brain tempered by experience.

20. The Commander Expeditionary Force retired the Air Support Group TG 61.1 before his covering operation was completed. He left the amphibious force without air cover. This caused CTF 62 to retire TF 62 before the transports and cargo ships were unloaded. This in turn left the First Marine Division ashore without adequate support or supplies.

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LESSON: The function of a carrier covering force, which is to provide close air support and to cover during an amphibious operation, is to gain and maintain local command of the objective area, and to give air support and air protection to the amphibious forces. It should be in sufficient strength and of sufficient logistic capacity to remain in the area until the officer commanding the landing forces has assumed responsibility for the objective area.

21. The damage control measures adopted by all ships were generally ineffective for immediate results. Such ineffectiveness not only assisted in preventing the adequate fighting of the various Allied ships but in addition; caused them to be presented to the enemy as brilliant targets with an ever decreasing combat ability factor.

LESSON: Damage Control is the responsibility of all hands. Upon its effectiveness depends the ship's ability to maintain its maximum offensive power against the enemy. War experience has shown that in many cases ships which appeared to be damaged

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beyond saving were saved because the personnel were well trained and put forth the same determined efforts towards saving the damaged ship that they exercised in fighting her. Commanding Officers therefore should maintain the most effective damage control organization possible.

22. The communications system in the SOWESPAC area was so operated as to enable the direct flow of information from SOWESPAC aircraft and from SOPAC aircraft in flight to COMSOWESPAC via the Headquarters Allied Air Forces at Brisbane. It did not serve in practice to provide a direct flow of information from SOWESPAC aircraft in flight to the OTC in the SOPAC Area. The result of this was that the average time from the plane contact until receipt of the information in the SOPAC Area was ten hours and eight minutes.

LESSON: Communications must be so organized as to insure that vital information, positive or negative, such as contact reports gets through with the minimum possible delay. Although control of communications ordinarily follows the chain of command,

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where higher efficiency will result functional communications organizations should be employed.

23. On several occasions certain of the Allied ships failed to recognize correctly friendly ships with the result that they fired into one another.

LESSON: CINCPAC stated: "If there is one lesson we have learned in the Pacific War, it is that constant training in visual recognition and identification for all topside station personnel on board ship and for all aircraft personnel is of vital importance."

24. During the Tulagi-Guadalcanal operation, no provisions were made for rearming the ships at sea. There were no replacement aircraft and, in particular, no replacement fighter aircraft. The full capabilities of mobile logistic support were not developed, nor as yet fully recognized.

LESSON: When combat operations are being conducted in an area remote from shore-based logistic support the effectiveness of the various commands can be vastly increased by the utilization of mobile

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logistic support. The force providing such support should be under the command of the OTC and its requirements should be planned concurrently with those of the interested commands.

25. Throughout this battle combatant ships, notably cruisers and destroyers, were employed as separate units, often entirely apart from their <sup>task</sup> organizations. This broke down the chain of command within the squadrons and divisions. However because of the nature of modern naval warfare, such a condition will probably obtain in a future war.

LESSON: All ships should be so trained as to permit readily their being shifted from one organization to another without unacceptable loss of efficiency. However, whenever practicable, the existing <sup>task</sup> organization should be maintained.

26. Throughout the Battle of Savo Island the TES voice radio was employed by many ships within Iron Bottom Sound making it difficult for the commanders on many occasions either to transmit or to receive. This voluminous traffic indicated panic, desperation,

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and utter confusion.

LESSON: The senior flag or Commanding Officer on a tactical voice radio circuit is the officer controlling the circuit. He is responsible for the radio discipline which, if poor may interfere seriously with vital tactical operations and may among other things, supply the enemy with important military data.

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## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : President

FROM : aide

SUBJECT: attached.

DATE:

1. Commo. Bates has requested you read this. He plans to take it with him to N.Y., providing it meets with your approval!
2. When do you plan to depart for N.Y.?

Very Respectfully  
Hearn

Inc Off  
This is excellent  
I would like to see  
torpedo argument of  
"Wilson" checked.

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26. The American destroyers at the time of the Battle of Savo Island were all essentially torpedo carriers. They were designed primarily for three fundamental tasks: (a) the protection of our own battle line and the destruction of the enemy battle line during fleet action; (b) the destruction of the enemy by night search and attack; (c) the protection of heavy units through antisubmarine and antiaircraft screens. The destroyer's other weapons (guns and depth charges), while important, did not replace the torpedo as the primary offensive weapon.

Despite this well-known fact, the torpedoes during the Battle of Savo Island were, in general, forgotten and primary reliance was placed in the guns. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the six destroyers (BLUE, RALPH TALBOT, PATTERSON, BAGLEY, HELM, and WILSON) assigned to the Allied screening group, were armed with sixteen torpedoes each. Thus, there was a total of ninety-six torpedoes available for use against the enemy. How were these torpedoes expended? The BAGLEY fired four at the FURUTAKA and KINUGASA, and the RALPH TALBOT four at the YUBARI, all of which missed. In other words, with an opportunity to inflict major damage on the enemy, our destroyers expended only 8.4% of their primary offensive weapons, and those to no avail. Nothing is known of the action of the JARVIS and her sixteen torpedoes.

The Japanese destroyers at the time of the Battle of Savo Island were also essentially torpedo carriers. But the Japanese felt so strongly about the offensive value of the torpedo that they armed their cruisers, both heavy and light, with them. All Japanese cruisers at the Battle of Savo Island were so armed.

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During the Battle of Savo Island the Japanese <sup>seven</sup> cruisers employed their torpedoes, ~~very~~ <sup>↑</sup> ~~effectively~~ against the ~~which were~~ <sup>seven</sup> far more effectively than did the American destroyers. The ~~Yamaguchi~~ <sup>and the Yamaguchi</sup> ~~which carried~~ carried sixty-four torpedoes. ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~which forty-seven~~ <sup>The cruiser</sup> ~~they fired~~ <sup>↑</sup> fired forty-seven torpedoes the Yamaguchi none, ~~and made some~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~hits~~ <sup>for a percentage of 70%.</sup> ~~The all~~ <sup>↑</sup> The ~~six~~ American destroyers on the other hand carried ninety-six torpedoes <sup>of which they</sup> ~~↑~~ <sup>↑</sup> fired eight. No hits were made.

The Japanese cruisers in the Battle of Savo Island employed their torpedoes far more effectively than did the American destroyers. In this connection it should be pointed out that the Japanese force of seven cruisers and one destroyer in this battle which carried a total of sixty-four torpedoes, fired forty-seven, or 70.3%, and obtained seven hits. They fired torpedoes as follows: CHOKAI four at CANBERRA, four at VINCENNES; FURUTAKA seven at CANBERRA, one at PATTERSON; KAKO three at CHICAGO, six at ASTORIA; KINUGASA four at CANBERRA, four at Area Xray; AOBA three at CANBERRA, one at QUINCY; TENRYU six at QUINCY; YUBARI four at VINCENNES. The YUNAGI appears to have fired none.

The contrast between <sup>American</sup> ~~Allied~~ and Japanese use of torpedoes in this action was striking. American destroyers failed to make optimum use of their primary weapon while the enemy exploited torpedoes <sup>much more</sup> ~~most~~ effectively. The absence of aggressively conducted torpedo attacks by American destroyers represented a serious failure in the application of doctrine in battle.

#### LESSON

The torpedo, because of its devastating effect on the underwater body of a ship, is one of the most deadly offensive naval weapons. All the general purpose destroyers in the United States Navy today are equipped with this weapon.

To deliver an effective attack the attacking destroyers must close the enemy until the attack can be delivered at the most

effective range otherwise the enemy may be given sufficient time to maneuver to avoid the torpedoes. Destroyer torpedo attacks are becoming more and more difficult as radars and radar tracking techniques become more efficient. For this reason there is a growing tendency to ignore this important weapon. While it may be true that opportunities to ~~use~~<sup>employ</sup> the torpedo will not be as frequent as heretofore, nevertheless such opportunities will occur and the Officers in Tactical Command must be prepared to exploit them as they arise. Training for this event must be continuous and the torpedo battery should be maintained at the highest state of readiness at all times.

When a destroyer attack has been launched it must be pressed home to insure its success. Should the enemy fire be so intense as to prevent an effective attack being delivered at the optimum firing point, the attack must then be delivered at the closest firing point which will permit such an effective attack to be delivered without unacceptable losses. This can best be accomplished by simultaneous multiple attacks.

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